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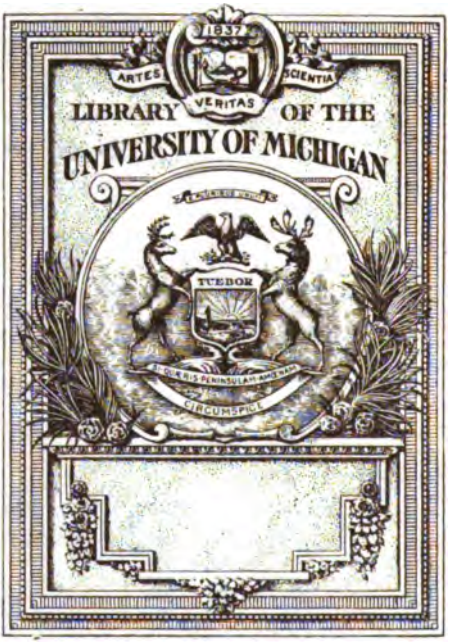
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# UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH

# UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH

ROLLIN LYNDE HARTT
Author of "The People at Play," etc.

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TO
MY WIFE

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# UNDERSTANDING THE FRENCH

## CHAPTER I

### *Very Personal: Their Bodily Selves*

IT was from Dover that we approached the French coast, this last time, and at Calais—naturally—that we renewed our acquaintance with living France.

I remember a lighthouse; a crucifix on a breakwater; a gaily fluttering tricolor flag; a long, solid, gray wharf of stone; and at its edge a score or two of diminutive, black-bearded, blue-bloused French porters.

Such midgets!

They reminded me of what I had read about all the big fellows in France having been killed off in Napoleon's wars. Indeed, they even seemed to justify the cynicism that describes the French as "a degenerate Latin race."

And they were shockingly like the other

Frenchmen round about us when we landed. Customs officers, policemen, soldiers, railway servants—yes, and the roly-poly, fierce-mustachioed French "voyagers" in the compartments of our *rapide* for Paris—all were midgets.

As we sped on our way toward "the City of Light," the billboards next the "road of iron" kept proclaiming their *57 variétés* of Heinz's pickles, but the peasants we saw from the car-window proclaimed only one variety of Frenchman. So in Paris, too. I felt like a skyscraper there. I always do. In a French crowd—watching a procession, say—the President of the Republic and his retinue escorting some foreign potentate—I never try for a place on the curb. Anywhere will serve. Although I lack two inches of being a six-footer, I look over the Parisians' heads with entire ease and comfort.

Ah, but when we reached our *pension* in the *Quartier Latin* that evening—lo, a Sorbonne undergraduate tall as an overgrown life-guard, a French journalist from the Jura taller still, and a hulking Breton engineer who matched the other two in height and outdid them in breadth and thickness.

"Well, well!" thought I. "Just see what's

befallen your theory of a degenerate Latin race!"

For now I remembered a French professor at home—the tallest professor, if not the tallest human being, I had ever reached up and shaken hands with. I remembered a splendid, towering French youth, son of an ambassador at Washington. I remembered Gilibert, that giant of the Metropolitan Opera Company. Evidently not all Frenchmen were midgets. Evidently it might pay to reconsider the notion of a degenerate Latin race.

Now, there are three ideas packed up in that phrase. It assumes that the French are a race, and that the race is Latin, and that it has degenerated.

A race—are they? Dozens of races, I should say. Look back over French history and see what it discloses regarding the national stock. France was Gallic, once; true; but the vast majority of the Gauls who escaped slaughter by the Roman legions fled into Germany. Those who stood their ground became scarcely more than a drop in the bucket, eventually, as compared with the hordes of German invaders who rushed the frontiers, overwhelmed the country, and served as the basis of the population we now call French.

Besides, think of the Celts in Britanny—Welshmen, almost—so Welsh that when Breton bards and bards from Wales meet at a modern Druid celebration, each party can understand the other's language. Think of the French Scandinavians—descendants of Rollo and his fair-haired Norman marauders. Think of the French Greeks, whose forefathers settled Massilia (now Marseilles). Think of the French Moors—a mixed race, to be sure, yet with swarthy skins and Arab features and such telltale names as Morel, Moret, Moreau, and the like. And then consider the French Jews—whole ghettos forcibly converted to Catholicism during the Middle Ages and absorbed by the Gentile population, so that the most impassioned of Anti-Dreyfusards is very possibly a Jew himself. Finally, count up the Slavic types, even the rare Negroid types and the scores of others that complete the vast and variegated Midway of living France.

True, France was Roman, once; but you will find nothing to show that it was at all extensively peopled with Romans. Quite the contrary. Nor do the French faces one sees to-day—the majority of them, I mean—the types that predominate—suggest a Latin origin. Glance

round you in Paris, any day. Of what does the average physiognomy remind you? Of Italians? Of Spaniards? Of Portuguese? Of South Americans? No, of Germans.

And this despite the many, many races that have been compounded to produce what we loosely term the French stock!

Nor has the compounding process ceased by any means. Among the upper and middle classes, international marriages are common. By and by, they will be common among the lower class also, and a strange mixture we shall behold then.

For the immigrants refused admission at American ports are allowed to settle in France. Already, Paris has become a veritable dumping-ground for undesirables from South-Eastern Europe and Asia Minor.

You see, then, what only a few moments' reflection has done to the idea of the French as a race and particularly as a Latin race. Remains that other popular humbug—the idea of the French as degenerate.

They have shrunk, have they? Then what of the French six-footers—those we encountered at our *pension* in the Quartier Latin—those I remembered having known, or at least seen, in

America? Must these be regarded as survivals of a type all but exterminated by Napoleon's wars?

The more I think of it, the less I am inclined to believe that the slaughter of big fellows a hundred years ago could so effectually have reduced the stature of living France. For there was no slaughter of tall women, and the next generation had a chance to inherit good height from their mothers—to say nothing of the chance of "taking back" and inheriting from their grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

But it appears to be less a question of what might have happened than of what did. For when the archæologists dig up an ancient French graveyard and measure the skeletons, it turns out that the Frenchmen of the olden times were not taller, on the average, than the Frenchmen of to-day. Away fly the legends of "giants in those days." Away flies the theory that French stature has shrunk.

Still, I suppose there are people who will urge that this hardly betters the case, since it admits that the French were always a little race—which, as such people reason, is as much as saying that they were always an inferior race. How natural to argue from littleness to inferi-

ority! The Russians did so—and encountered the Japs!

Well, what is it, as a matter of scientific fact, that makes one man tall, another man short? Simply a difference in the length of the thigh-bone. Seated, the men are the same height. It is when they stand up that the femur counts, and who will claim that the femur is the seat of physical (let alone mental and moral) stamina?

It appears, then, that stature has little if anything to do with stamina; and if you think the French physique deficient, merely because French people are rarely tall, it must be inferred that you have never worked in the life-class—at Colarossi's, for instance, or the Grande Chaumière—and seen living France posing nude. Oh, those magnificent, deep-bosomed girls, those superbly muscled men! Hundreds of them—in the *croquis* class, a new model every day! So multitudinous are they that you cease to think of them as exceptional types, picked for their excellence, and in reality they are not. They are bred to their profession. I have seen five-year-olds posing. I have seen infants posing in their mothers' arms, and, name of a name, how those righteously indignant babes did squall!

But one need not study art to get an impression of the tremendous bodily vigor of the French. There is proof enough of it in the innumerable men and women who seem to have subsisted so exclusively on horse-meat that they are all dragging carts around the streets.

No joke this—either as concerns the horse-meat or as concerns the carts. Observe the five great Parisian abattoirs devoted solely to the slaughter of horses. Observe the countless *boucheries chevalines* or *hippophagiques,* with gold horse-heads for signs and with such inscriptions as "Ass and Mule a Specialty." Then observe the hand-carts, and notice that, like nearly everything else in France, they weigh anywhere from forty to fifty kilos too much. Yet it is women, oftenest, who propel them.

Or again, observe the enormous armies of porters, *commissionaires, débardeurs,* and those Herculean *forts* at the markets. In France, whatever can be carried on heads or shoulders or backs is preferably so carried. Though saving of coppers, the French waste perspiration. To use their own epithet, they are "laborious."

And eternally at it, too, working incredible hours. Left to their own devices, they would

toil seven days a week. The ten-hour law for factories is miserably enforced. In the dressmaking establishments there are women who work from twelve to sixteen hours a day. Among those who work in their garret lodgings, with song-birds to relieve their dreadful loneliness, cases are found where a girl drudges steadily seventeen or eighteen hours and makes a bare subsistence, living mainly on that "cause profonde de la tuberculose," fried potatoes.

It is only within the last few years that France has had a Weekly Rest Day Law, and it affects only employees. Employers can work unceasingly. So can their wives and children, unless paid. So can any individual who is master of his own labor.

Go where you will in France, it is always the same impression—of a people willingly drudging at tasks too arduous for anybody and continuing their work far, far beyond the point where ordinary mortals would lie down and die.

If this be degeneracy, how I wish we might import a little into our indolent, easy-going, labor-hating America! Imagine, for instance, American servants shouldering a job like Pierre and Marguerite's at our *pension* in the *Quartier Latin!* With never an afternoon out, the cheery couple did chamber-work for thirty

boarders, waited on them at table, fetched their coal and wood and water, tended fires and lamps —in short, except for the cook and her scullery-maid, ran the house, and smiled while they ran it, and were ultimately discharged "for laziness."

But while one stands amazed at the industry of the French and their limitless endurance, the supreme marvel is not this. The supreme marvel is that there should be anybody left alive in France to exhibit industry and endurance. When the Paris reporters crowded around Edison and begged for his impressions, he said, "Tell Frenchmen they know nothing about hygiene."

Which was stating it mildly. The more you see of French ways the more you wonder how living France ever survived its infancy. Think of feeding babies on soup! Slum mothers do this in France—yes, often—because soup is cheaper than milk. And think what his peasant nurse had been doing to the beautiful little four-months-old Frenchman we adopted! With the best intentions, she scrupulously avoided washing Baby's head, never gave him a bath, and fed him on cold boiled milk (unmodified) every two hours day and night.

It nearly finished him, poor infant! When

we took him he had a bloated body and skinny arms and legs, and outrageous sores from not being bathed or powdered, and it was two whole days before vaseline could get down to his tender young scalp. And you should have seen him in his first bath! Insane with rage and terror, he lifted up his voice and swore.

No blame to his peasant nurse, however. She did as other peasant nurses do, and the wealthy Parisians who had had charge of him had placed him out with her "because the regimen was so healthful."

Naturally, I am not declaring that no one in France understands the care of children. There are English nurses—hundreds of them—wearing something like the deaconess costume—of brown or blue according to the school where they were trained. Wonderfully efficient they are, as we learned by employing one, and amazingly tyrannical. When Baby was asleep, it was grand to see that nurse having it out with a hen that had dared lay an egg and cackle.

But you must not imagine that all the brown or blue uniforms clothe English nurses. Dear, dear, no! With French families of the upper class, it has become a hobby—not to say a *snobisme*—to have English nurses, and consequently there are brown or blue costumes that

cover a multitude of French girls. Often, it turns out that what seemed to be 'Awkins or Handrews is only Nounou (French baby-talk for *nourrice,* nurse) in disguise. Too bad! Nounou was infinitely more picturesque in the gorgeous cloak and cap and dazzling streamers now almost wholly extinct.

It is possible, however, that even a disguised Nounou may understand how to take care of Bébé. But I doubt if the best of Nounous compares favorably with the average English or American nurse, and it is clear that, as Bébé grows older, he has awful odds to contend against.

For *Nounou* agrees with *Maman* that little children should go bare-legged all winter. It "hardens" them. Incidentally it saves money. Whereas stockings keep wearing out at the knee, socks are as economical, almost, as the black pinafores French children put on over their clothes.

Then, too, the French young hopeful must accustom himself far too early to the habits that are suited only to grown-ups. Or at least, such has been my observation, and yours too, no doubt. Have you not seen little Parisians—oh, very, very little Parisians!—eating precisely what their elders ate, and even given wine?

And have you not glanced in through the open windows, on your way home at ten in the evening, and seen very, very little Parisians not yet put to bed? Why, good gracious! when the uproarious Fête de Neuilly was raging its wildest (of which more hereafter) we used to see the wooden horses of the children's merry-go-round laden with pale, hollow-eyed, tiny creatures of six and seven *at midnight!*

Now, of course, one may make too much of the shocks one gets from occasional and perhaps unrepresentative observations. One may generalize too freely. One may exaggerate. And yet, making all due allowance for such temptations, it is my opinion that the average French boy or girl has far less chance of developing favorably than the average American boy or girl has. Sometimes I go further, and theorize, indulging a suspicion that perhaps the French race, as a whole, is stunted by the well-meaning but mistaken treatment that it receives in infancy and early childhood.

But while I have risked the hazard of drawing inferences somewhat rashly, so far, I am not depending on guess-work in what follows. I am not depending on judgment. I am depending on perfectly tangible, visible evidence, which cannot escape any one at all acquainted with

French life. For instance, as regards the almost universal French abhorrence of ventilation.

True, there are Anglo-maniacs in France—Anglo-maniacs with monocles and *bouledogues* and ultra-British clothes made by that Boulevard celebrity, the "High Life Tailor," or his rival, the "Nice Life Tailor"—and these Anglomaniacs (called *les snobs*) profess a passion for fresh air. It is true, moreover, that France is an outdoor country. One dines in one's garden or on the sidewalk in front of a restaurant. One drinks in front of a café, even in winter. Sometimes the café puts stoves outside (huge, smelly stoves, with stove-pipes spouting gas) as if in hope of warming the street. At all seasons and in all weathers, plenty of French people consent to ride on the tops of trams and busses. And, whenever possible, French people do their work out of doors. In Paris, for instance, what an array of outdoor trades—the selling of "antiquities" and old books in the open air along the *quais,* the marketing of everything from flowers and songbirds to sheer junk in the streets and open squares, and the mending of sacks, the washing and clipping of dogs, and the shaving of mendicants (at one cent a chin) down at the edge of the Seine!

Ah, but just see how fresh air terrifies French people the moment they have a roof over their heads! In a French railway train—no matter how warm the day or how stuffy the compartment—woe to him who dares open a window! In a lecture hall crowded with Sorbonne students, the professor's first care, on arriving, is to glance 'round the room and make sure that every aperture is hermetically sealed.

In a great measure, you may lodge the blame for this with the French window. It won't ventilate moderately. Opening like a door, it affords a crack pretty nearly all the way from the floor to the ceiling and half-way across the window at top and bottom. Rather than overdo fresh air indoors, the French prefer to do without it so far as possible. All the year round, they sleep with their windows shut. And nothing can exceed their horrified amazement when they hear that you sleep with yours open. Why is not Monsieur dead, by blue?

It is in winter, naturally, that the terror of ventilation becomes most serious. For then the windows are closed not only at night but also by day, and at the very season when fresh air is most needed, as nature's other germicide—namely, sunshine—is shut off for weeks at a stretch. Yes, literally! Whenever the cold,

vile, winter drizzle lets up, Frenchmen clap their hands and cry, "Ah, messieurs, it does beautiful time!" When the sun comes out, they are in raptures unspeakable, though it gives a poor performance at best, for the orb of day hugs the southern horizon, and sinks behind the mansards and chimney-pots of Paris at a quarter past three. And this in "sunny France"! This in the "city of light"! Worse yet, this in a land where the battle with tuberculosis is ever a losing fight!

*Mon Dieu,* what a perfect winter carnival for microbes is afforded in those damp, chill, dark, unventilated French houses! And what a carnival French microbes enjoy the whole year 'round! A singular anomaly: France, the home of bacteriology, is shamelessly the home of bacteria.

And of flies! France has still to learn that flies carry disease. If there is a screened window in Paris, it has never caught my attention, whereas hundreds of unscreened butcher shops have—their fronts open to the street, with flies coming in, and dust coming in, and every carcase exposed to both dust and flies, and nobody caring.

Oh, the things they do to their eatables in

France! Especially the bread. Servants go about the streets with their long, slim, wrapperless loaves under their arms. They set them down wherever they like. I have even seen a loaf of bread used as a walking-stick, and if the Paris streets ever merited their reputation for extravagant cleanliness, they no more merit it to-day than the French people do.

Perhaps you have heard France called "the land of the lace curtain and the dirty finger-nail." It is even possible that you have heard what an American tourist remarked on encountering a fifty-third painting of Susanna and the Elders: "Nobody in Paris takes a bath but Susanna, and she takes hers all over the place." At any rate, you must have seen carts going about the streets of French cities with bath tubs for rent, and it is not surprising if you have inferred that baths, in France, are a kind of annual or biennial ablution, since you naturally take it as proved that there are no bathrooms in French houses.

In the main, that is true. Even handsome and comparatively modern apartments are blandly offered *à louer* at a high rental without bath-rooms. Which is shocking, of course, and ridiculous, but hardly an evidence that the

*locataires* go unwashen. For one always finds an "establishment of baths" only a block or two from anywhere.

However, I have yet to witness a run on the bath-house, and I am afraid that among the French a bath is a considerably less frequent adventure than among Anglo-Saxons. Perhaps this accounts, in part, for the dull and pasty pallor of French people and their liking for perfumery.

Fortunately, the bath-tub is gradually invading the French home and even the French *pension*. Ours in the *Quartier Latin* has its bath-room, now, and if you apply in advance and choose an hour somewhere between 11 A. M. and 3 P. M., you can bathe for one franc and fifty centimes. Yes, actually!

But perhaps I am mistaken in tracing the French pallor to a lack of really frenzied enthusiasm for bathing. No doubt this tends to reduce the activity of the skin, but there are other causes for the pallor—among them, drink. France drinks too much—far, far too much.

Not that France is drunken. We are the drunken nation, France the sober one. The familiar spectacle of a poor devil being dragged aboard a patrol wagon is practically unknown

in France. Not more than once or twice a year will you see a tipsy Frenchman reeling along the street. Not more than once or twice in a lifetime will you transact business with a Frenchman whose brain is perceptibly clouded with alcohol. Frenchmen detest drunkenness. They can't for the life of them see what fun there is in losing control of their wits and their tongues. They tipple for good cheer, not for madness or stupor. Instead of demanding the heavy drinks so common with us, they prefer light wines and especially beer. But when very nearly the entire population drinks, and drinks constantly, and is imposed upon with outrageous adulterations, the influence on public hygiene cannot be other than detrimental.

You ask yourself what the authorities are thinking about, not to take the drink problem in hand. The answer is, they are thinking what the average Frenchman thinks: namely, that wine is "a natural, healthful beverage" upon whose sale no restrictions need be placed. In a French city, you can set up as a saloon keeper as unceremoniously as you would set up as a boarding-house keeper. All that tends to reduce the number of saloons is competition, and very little effect competition appears to have. As for the law, it bears down on the liquor trade

at just one point—by taxing the transportation of brandy.

I predict, though, that before many years it will bear down at another point also, and attempt to abolish absinthe. For, while the vast majority of French people refresh themselves with beer or wine, the absinthe-drinkers are an ever-present horror, and there are even those who go to a visible and scandalous excess in their absinthe-drinking. When you encounter what seems at first to be some lunatic at large —perfectly coherent of speech, perfectly steady of gait, but singing or threatening or soliloquizing or orating on the street corner—there, sure enough, is your absinthe-victim. By and by, he will be a lunatic outright.

Now, it is true that absinthe-drinking has already betrayed the first slight symptoms of decline. Gone are the days when writers, artists, composers and thinkers applied to "the green Muse" for inspiration. They have learned the idiocy of that. Moreover, Frenchmen will tell you that heavy drinks in general are being more and more avoided by brain workers. Of late years there has been a first-rate muckraking of "alcohol" (meaning brandy) in the popular magazines. And meanwhile there are indications that Paris is recovering from its fear of

water. One afternoon a model at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière began to faint. Instantly, up hopped a young Frenchman and filled a glass with water from the faucet. The girl drank it. Wonderful: two French people convinced that water, unmixed with wine, might fail to kill!

Meanwhile, one hears of a small but hopeful total abstinence society among the French Protestants, and in the restaurants one not infrequently sees Frenchmen drinking milk, instead of wine or beer, with their luncheon. Capital! As encouraging, in its way, as the astonishing multiplicity of tea-rooms! They are an English idea, the tea-rooms—a concession to *le snobisme*—but not less popular on that account. Everywhere, you behold the enticing English sign, "Five o'Clock"—sometimes the still more captivating one, "Five o'Clock at All Hours."

And yet, when one has counted up the various substitutes for alcoholic drinks and what hints there are of improvement in drinking customs, the fact remains that France—even sober, decent, "discreet," home-loving France—is overstimulated, and that constantly.

Furthermore, it is drugged. Awful stories are current, just as here, about the abuse of opiates, but it is to a much graver scandal that

I refer—namely, the omnipresent drug-store. In any French city you will be amazed at the profusion of drug-stores, and still more amazed when you discover what a French drug-store deals in. Not candy and cigars and magazines and umbrellas and post-cards and soda-water, with the remnants of a drug business tacked on. Barring a few "blades Gillette" and a few cakes of toilet soap, the French drug-store sells nothing but drugs. Vast must be the French appetite for pills and powders, you would infer, to support this appalling traffic.

Well, perhaps. And yet Frenchmen explain it—laughingly, it is true, but with sufficient seriousness—as the result of a charming *escroquerie.* Nobody in France ever thinks of consulting a physician. Instead, one consults the corner druggist, and a great, great *savant* is he, with the purple ribbon of the Académie in his buttonhole and perchance a bust of Æsculapius on the wall. He feels one's pulse, takes one's temperature, peers down one's throat, and, wringing his hands and tearing his hair, cries, "Ah, dear friend, in a desperate plight like yours, I should fly to no less a wizard than the renowned Dr. Lemonnier, up three flights."

Dr. Lemonnier, in his turn, feels one's pulse, takes one's temperature, peers down one's

throat, and, wringing his hands and tearing his hair, all but gives one up. Then, seized with a sudden inspiration, he sits down and writes prescriptions—for things in bottles, things in bags, things in boxes, things in bales—and cries at last, "*Voilà!* Now, dear friend, in a desperate plight like yours, I should fly to no less a wizard than that loyal, that brilliant, that affectionate druggist, M. Delacroix, down three flights."

Take the legend for what it is worth. At all events, there stand the unnumbered and innumerable drugstores—as conclusive a proof of drug-devouring as the unnumbered and innumerable wine-barrels at the *Halle aux Vins* are of tippling. Along with closed windows, such shockers would suffice to account for the prevailing French pallor, even were there a less extensive neglect of physical exercise.

To judge by the space devoted to *les sports* in *Le Temps* or *Le Figaro,* it might seem that *le tennis, le football, le hockey, le canotage, la boxe,* and the rest enjoyed a quite bewildering popularity. Out at Bagatelle on a Sunday afternoon, one gets the same impression. But when you visit an illustrious university—some French Yale or Harvard—you look in vain for a "gym" or a stadium or an athletic team, and

it turns out that the heroes of the institution are not the crack sportsmen, but the crack lady-killers. And I may add that lady-killing, as practised by French students, is anything but an ennobling pastime.

Nevertheless, there are signs that *la vie sportive* is gaining ground. It has outgrown the patriotic stage. Frenchmen no longer go in for sports merely because the newspapers bid them get up their muscle preparatory to another struggle with Germany. It takes a less bloodthirsty motive, now, to bestir them. Anglo-mania will do it. Only see *les snobs,* yonder at Bagatelle, playing "soccer" in the self-same rig you have seen at Oxford—bright jersey, short running breeches, bare knees! Or watch the riders in the Bois—round-shouldered, it is true, and mounted on nags whose luxuriant fetlocks would make an Englishman weep, yet brave in British riding togs, to say nothing of their monocles! Or again, observe Frenchmen dismally pursuing that sad, sad game, *le golf! Sapristi!* 'tis a heart-breaking spectacle!

Still, this devout *snobisme* is for the rich, mainly, and it is encouraging to find another and quite different force at work to encourage sport among the masses. I refer to the passion

for "eccentricity." Clerks, factory drudges, "functionaries," and multitudes of sedentary workers, whose usual exercise is once in a great while riding a bicycle, will display the gayest enthusiasm for *les sports excentriques*—such, for instance, as the foot-race up the Eiffel Tower and the uproarious barrel-rolling contest or the wild and furious velocipede race for "infants," to say nothing of the water-jousting tournaments, and, in the South, the amazing fightless bull-fight known as a *course libre.*

A jolly game, that! We saw it in *les arénes,* as they call the old Roman amphitheater at Nîmes. Fifty young hoodlums attempted to snatch away a coin tied between the bull's horns —attempted it six times, with six successive bulls—and tremendous was the agility displayed by the fifty young hoodlums. As for the bulls (half-grown steers, to tell the truth) they exhibited a kind of maiden shyness—not altogether inappropriately, considering that one of them was christened La Gazelle!

A characteristically French sport is the *course libre,* and you may say the same of *pelote basque,* a species of French lacrosse played with a leather racquet lashed to the arm. And even tennis is French, though reintroduced into France from England. But the vast ma-

jority of French sports originated in England, and still bear English names.

Which leads one to infer, not incorrectly, that the French have no really burning passion for physical exercise and never have had. At present, their most hilarious devotion attaches itself to automobilism and more especially to aviation. If the Paris "Apache" were the Indian his name would indicate, we might expect him to comment, "Heap lazy Frenchman! Sits down when he flies!"

And yet despite their littleness and the setback they receive in their babyhood and their injuries from bad air and too infrequent bathing and far too frequent wine-bibbing, the French can turn out magnificent athletes on occasion, and do. Ask the Scotch football team that did battle with the French team in Paris. As Plupy Shute would say, it was a "buly fite," from which the Scots were lucky to get off alive, and, whatever else they may be saying about Frenchmen, you may be sure they are not calling them a "degenerate Latin race."

Hoots, no!

## CHAPTER II

### *"Gay Paree"*

SOMEWHERE in his "Table Talk," Cowper declares:

> "The Frenchman, easy, debonair, and brisk,
> Give him his lass, his fiddle, and his frisk,
> Is always happy, reign whoever may,
> And laughs the sense of mis'ry far away."

Several generations of "easy, debonair, brisk" Frenchmen have been gathered to their fathers since Cowper's time, yet his is still our common estimate of the French temperament.

For my own part, I should call that estimate a wonderful tribute to French stamina. Certainly, a people capable of drudging as the French drudge and enduring all the French endure and still displaying a surplus of hilarity and effervescent good spirits must be anything but a "degenerate Latin Race."

It appears, however, that comments like Cowper's are not intended as tributes. *Pas du tout!*

They involve charges of frivolity, for one thing, and of licentiousness for another. They fit in well enough with the story of the tourist who was asked if he had a good time in Paris and replied, "No, I had my wife with me." In fact, they recall that other story—about the deacon who glanced round him in Paris and exclaimed, "Gee-whizz! how I wish I had struck this town before I was converted!"

If I chose, I could retort that tourists, deacons, and others make an awful mistake in attempting to judge French character by the "gay" side of Paris, since "Paris is not France." For in a certain sense it is not. Intensely cosmopolitan, it is "the music-hall of Europe" and amazingly different from the minor French cities. It is to provincial France what New York is to Oshkosh and Kalamazoo. Frenchmen who have solemnly "ranged themselves" at home reserve the right to go in for "a lass, a fiddle, and a frisk" when they visit Paris.

Yet meanwhile it must be remembered that the Parisians themselves are not Parisian but provincial. Unable to reproduce itself, Paris recruits its population from outside. Hence the peasant *coiffes* worn by thousands of Parisian

servants on a holiday; the numerous organizations of Sons of Picardy, Sons of Auvergne, Sons of Gascony and the rest, with their annual banquets in Paris; and, equally as loyal to *la petite patrie,* the public that reads provincial newspapers in the Bois or the Parc Monceau.

In a sense fairly legitimate, then, Paris is France. And the whole world asserts that Paris is "gay."

Naturally, one hesitates to contradict the whole world. So, hearing that gaiety runs riot in Paris, one resolves to look about and see if Paris is not in reality the frivolous capital where Frenchmen, "easy, debonair, and brisk," pass their time in laughter and in mirthful dissipations.

To a Puritan, new to French ways, Paris seems—oh! unquestionably gay, not to say bacchanalian. Everybody is drinking—yes, by blue, right out in the street! It appears to be a clear case. For what Puritan will appreciate that drinking wine in front of a café is about as wild a debauch, to a Frenchman, as eating doughnuts in the back pantry is to a Puritan?

Moreover, the new-comer is bewildered by a profusion of naughty nude marble nymphs and nude bronze pagan goddesses, at once lovely

and shameless, overrunning the public parks, the public squares, even the public buildings. An American city, similarly embellished, would be "gay," for one thing, vicious for another, and highly inconceivable for a third. Standards differ, however. Nudes, in Paris, are not less innocent than our bronze and marble imitations of dry goods (with human figures supposed to exist somewhere inside) are to us.

But your Puritan will not have spent many excited minutes in Paris without noticing that photographs of artists' models ("le Nu Academique") are for sale at the newspaper kiosks, along with what purports to be a "Strangers' Guide" to the red-light district, or without encountering proclamations of a resort famous the world over for its licentious "French gaiety." Think of it—on the advertising pillars along the very boulevards, the daring posters of that haven and heaven of our tourists, the Moulin Rouge!

The Puritan shudders, then falls victim to a vast and burning inquisitiveness, and is saying to himself, presently, "But really, you know, this is one side of French life. No conscientious traveler can afford to miss seeing it." Accordingly, out he starts, very much in the spirit of the New England rustic, who said, "Goin' to

Boston to git drunk, an' gawsh haow I dread it!"

Well, in plain terms, what does your Puritan see at the Moulin Rouge? A great deal of nakedness—nakedness completely outdoing that with which "interpretative" dancers have regaled the American public. Then what else? Vice—any amount of it—and vulgarity, unspeakable vulgarity, vulgarity so abominable that only the vilest degenerate would ever have imagined it possible, or, for that matter, imagined it at all. Surfeited with shock and loathing, the Puritan "saves himself"—as the French say, meaning "takes to the tall timber" —and, all the rest of his days, relates how he once "lifted the lid of French gaiety and witnessed the real thing."

Yet consider. Who, as a matter of fact, were the people he saw making merry at the Moulin Rouge? Parisians? *Oh, jamais de la vie!* Parisians no more think of visiting the Moulin Rouge than they think of visiting Maxim's. The few Frenchmen your Puritan may have found there had come from Lyons or Rouen or Bordeaux. For Parisians detest stupidity, abandoning such resorts to Americans, Englishmen, Russians, and the occasional French booby from *la petite patrie.*

Having begun his disillusionment, I may be forgiven if I further inform the Puritan that the Moulin Rouge, like Magic City and Maxim's, is owned by a British company. It is as far from being French as it is from being gay.

But, even could we account in like manner for all the other commercialized frivolities of Paris, it would nevertheless remain true that the Frenchman thinks of himself as gay. To show how gay he is, he turns up his mustaches, just as an American, to show how serious he is, turns his mustaches down. Indeed, a Frenchman is on the whole rather pleased than otherwise when described as "easy, debonair and brisk," superior to dejection if only he can have "his lass, his fiddle and his frisk."

Nevertheless, I suspect that Frenchmen overestimate their gaiety. I am tempted to agree with the Englishman who remarked, "You will see more happy faces in London in five minutes than in Paris in five days." Glance about you in the streets—even in the gayest gay boulevards, and ask yourself if this is not so. Or compare the faces there with American faces, and I think you will conclude that the American street, not the French street, overflows with living sunshine.

When I try to analyze the difference and de-

termine in just what it consists, I come back always to the theory that it is a difference in the faces of young girls. In any American city, what bright, gay, friendly eyes meet yours, almost saying, "A beautiful day, sir, isn't it?" More than anything else, the jollity in the eyes of young girls is what makes the jollity of the street.

And an evasive glumness in the eyes of young girls is what makes the—well, not dreariness, exactly, but the quality you would never mistake for jubilance—of the usual French street. The *jeune fille* is afraid to look a man in the face, as she passes; he might speak to her and she knows it. Besides, she has been rigorously disciplined. "La pudeur, Mademoiselle! La pudeur!"

Nor is she gay at heart, particularly. Alas, poor captive, oppressed, deprived little *jeune fille!* Not till she is let out of her cage—that is to say, married—can she read novels, or go to plays, or exchange jokes with men, or eat bonbons, or lie late in bed, or do any of the fifty-odd agreeable things that are forbidden by *Maman* because they play havoc, not only with a *jeune fille's* morals, but (worse yet) with the trim, graceful lines of a *jeune fille's* figure.

And even this looking forward to the day

when she can "marry herself" is generally quite lacking in romance. Mademoiselle's parents will approach a young man's parents, match her dowry against his dowry, and tie her up for life to an all-but stranger. Which is hardly a prospect to fill Mademoiselle's eyes with dancing light.

Now, when gaiety has fled the faces of young girls, it will seem to have fled the hearts of an entire people, or practically so, though appearances may be deceptive. Especially in France. For, no matter what the French face would tell us about the French temperament, we still have the French climate to reckon with, and it is a climate singularly favorable to gaiety. Oh, yes, indeed!

In the first place, the climate teaches a Frenchman not to care a sou if people happen to be watching while he is standing on his head. This it accomplishes by making the French an out-door race, so that little desire for concealment remains, since little can be concealed. A man unblushingly kisses his uncle in public. He lets out all his feelings. If touched, he weeps. If excited, he gesticulates. If some joyous impulse bids him go hippety-hop down the Champs-Élysées, then hippety-hop down the Champs-Élysées he goes.

And when it comes to cutting loose in an amusement resort, he is absolutely free from *le trac*—that being French slang for the "golly-wobbles." Anything he takes it into his pate to do, he does. For instance, hear the loud, concerted, rhythmic rumpus inside a show at Luna-Park, out by the Porte Maillot! The audience grows impatient. Presently a superb *monsieur*, with a *chapeau* "high of form with eight reflections," rises from a front seat, lifts a corner of the curtain, peers under it, turns to the spectators with an ecstatic smile, waves his stove-pipe, and says, "A-a-ah!" Everybody laughs. The noise increases, and at last up goes the curtain amid impassioned "A-a-ahs!" from all the "assistance."

Or, out yonder on the sheet-iron billows of the Witching Waves, behold a widow in deepest black, coursing this way and that in her comical little invalid chair on casters.

You can imagine an American widow risking longing glances at Luna-Park and wishing to goodness she had the spunk to enter. Perhaps you can imagine an American widow venturing in through the giddy portals, choosing some secluded nook, and looking on at other people's monkeyshines, while shedding an occasional crocodile tear by way of a concession to the

proprieties. But an American widow riding the Witching Waves—oh, not in those weeds if she knows it!

In France, thanks to the climate and its effects on human nature, "everything goes." Everything—practically without exception. People who eat on the sidewalk as a mere matter of course, will eat in trees for fun, and it becomes profitable to build arboreal restaurants. Run out to Robinson, some jolly day, and try how it feels to lunch like a Dicky bird. Up a rope comes your *déjeuner* in a beatific basket. Up the stairs in the tree, flight after flight, trots your arboreal *garçon de café* to remove the dishes.

A merry place is Robinson and famed for its wedding parties. See! One is just arriving, the bride ostentatiously visible in a carriage (with glass on all four sides) called an "aquarium." And, *mon Dieu,* what kissing, what larking, what dancing, what music! Strange though, that the little orchestra should so soon be playing "La Veuve Joyeuse"! *Quelle indiscretion!*

But while climate in France makes for gaiety by abolishing shyness, it also favors the business of promoting gaiety. In a climate like ours, with its long, dismal winter, the out-door

amusement business has a languid existence at best and never thinks of maintaining the thousands on thousands of pink-pig merry-go-rounds, the terrific steam-swings, the torrential "human cascades" and wondrous gingerbread booths, to say nothing of the countless armies of *forains* who live by maintaining them.

By grace of the climate, French cities have their peripatetic street fairs the whole year round. It is not primarily because an "easy, debonair, brisk" race surpasses us in its love of gaiety. It is not primarily because the French face, however solemn its habitual expression, belies the French temperament. It is not because the French exaggerations have told the truth about the French genius for gaiety nor yet chiefly because an out-door life has given the French a happy indifference to being watched while taking their pleasure. No, the great point is simply that "the affairs are the affairs" (French for "business is business") and that an open winter enables these riotous *fêtes foraines* to "ignore the season dead"—in other words, not to recognize such a thing as a dull season. Even in deepest, dampest, darkest December the open-air amusement-promoters are at it with undiminished fury.

No wonder! Although Northern France is very nearly in the latitude of Labrador, the Gulf Stream brings eternal warmth. It is almost Christmas before the last roses and chrysanthemums perish in the Luxembourg Garden. Certain flowers—tenacious violets and a pinky, pulpy blossom resembling our begonia—stick it out valiantly all winter. It scarcely ever snows. There is not a sleigh in Paris. When a genuine blizzard swooped down, several years ago, it totally paralyzed traffic. As for ice, why, half an inch of it anywhere is a sensation. And by the first of March—earlier, perhaps—the almonds and peach-trees are in bloom.

Presently the goatherd arrives in Paris—the wonderful pipe-playing goatherd who has driven his six black Nanny goats all the way from the Pyrenees and, with a pair of dogs to keep them from straying, fetches them to your door and milks them there.

Oh, I am not saying it is an agreeable winter! I consider it quite the nastiest ever invented—particularly as nobody in France understands keeping a house warm. Out in the *banlieu,* we had central heating (wonderful!) and they let the furnace go out every night and never got it honestly under way until eleven in the morning.

Indeed, I know but one device to avoid shivering. Study art. Owing to the extreme chilliness of nude models ("La porte, s'il vous plait") the studios fairly glow. But the cold outdoors, though penetrating, is never severe —at least, never severe enough to discourage a street-fair.

Naturally, though, the *fêtes foraines* thrive still more lustily in summer, and it is in June and at Neuilly, just beyond the Porte Maillot and close to the Bois de Boulogne, that the institution attains its most frantic glories. I ought to know. Dear, dear! weren't we there, the four of us, including the adopted French baby and his English nurse, and didn't our windows look out on pandemonium gone as mad as ten thousand of the maddest mad hatters? Let me tell you. And let me first sketch at least an outline picture of the Avenue de Neuilly, scene of that raging, roaring tumult of French gaiety.

From the fortifications of Paris, the Avenue de Neuilly goes a mile and a half, relentlessly straight, to the banks of the Seine opposite Courbevoie. Properly speaking, it is not a street; it is three streets, side by side, enclosing two fine strips of tree-shaded park. From our house in the Avenue de Neuilly to the Grande Parfumerie over the way is a serious journey.

You cross a sidewalk, then a street ("Take guard for the tramway"), then a park ("Ah, messieurs, what beautiful plane-trees!"), then an excessively broad street, then another park, and, after crossing a third street, you traverse a sidewalk, and at last, *voilá!* there you are!

Late in May, posters appeared in the Avenue, announcing the annual Foire de Neuilly. The Avenue shuddered. For that matter, so did all Neuilly. But what would you? "The affairs are the affairs." This gigantic *fête foraine* not only brings trade along with it; it helps pay taxes, as the funds it turns over to the municipality by way of rent for the Avenue de Neuilly go towards the support of the public schools.

On the first of June, came immense red poles, to be set up along the sides of the central street as supports for arches of electric lights. Neuilly gasped. All the Neuilly that could escape packed its trunk. Unable to escape, we gritted our teeth and prepared for torment.

A day or two later, a thousand huge gipsy vans invaded the Avenue de Neuilly, ranged themselves in double (if not triple) rows in the strips of park between the central street and those alongside it, and transformed the whole

thoroughfare into one vast, outrageous, teeming Coney Island on wheels.

Then began the erection of portable theaters, portable gingerbread-booths, portable museums of anatomy, portable wild-beast shows, and egregious, towering amusement devices as portable as the rest. Simply no end of them! All the *forains* from the Place des Invalides were there, all those from the Avenue du Maine and their rivals from the Boulevard de Clichy and more from a score of other districts and not a few from the country as far away as St. Germain-en-Laye, I suspect. In a day, almost, the central street was bordered with carnival attractions all the way from the Porte de Neuilly to the river, and behind each attraction was a cluster of gipsy vans, with lace curtains in their windows, while, half-way down the Avenue, two vans stood end to end and made a schoolhouse for the showmen's children.

Then came the awful evening of the *retraite aux flambeaux,* as the French call a torch-light procession. The Hotel de Ville blazed with lights and rang with music. After a reception by the city fathers to the chief showmen, a gay parade began—firemen, police, and every available man from the *fête foraine,* all carrying

clusters of Japanese lanterns hung from tall, diamond-shaped frames topped with immense, glowing tulips of translucent paper, exceedingly pretty. Up the broad Avenue du Roule went the procession, with bands playing and crowds cheering; then, turning to the left, where it came to the Seine, it marched to the old stone bridge, turned to the left again and entered the Avenue de Neuilly, where a hundred garish arches of electric light flashed into dazzling radiance and, in front of a hundred gaudy shows, the torches were flaming, the clowns prancing, the barkers shouting, and dancing-girls or chained animals offering samples of the delights within, all to an accompaniment of hurdy-gurdies, megaphones, locomotive-whistles, brass bands, bells, horns, drums, and gigantic steam-organs, to say nothing of the hubbub of something like a hundred thousand people.

Beginning daily at noon and never letting up till midnight, this illimitable pandemonium was to last very nearly a month. Sundays included. And think! It comes every year. It is an institution. It ranks among the leading French industries. It is "one of the glories of the France." Beyond question, it is the most convincing and unequivocal exhibit of French

gaiety, especially as it has its counterparts, in one form and another, all over the country.

Mi-Carême may be prettier, with its marvelous cavalcade and its showers of confetti and its carnival dress for the little folks. Reveillon may be more frivolous—a nation sitting up all night to welcome the Yuletide holiday for which scarcely one Frenchman in ten cares a copper, except as it amuses the children when Father Noël brings them bonbons for being good, or little bundles of switches for being bad. And the Fête des Fleurs may be a daintier sight, with its interminable files of flower-decked carriages and automobiles in the Bois and the joyous ferocity with which the merrymakers hurl flowers at one another's heads. But neither the Mardi Gras parade nor the Christmas Eve carousals nor the Battle of the Flowers can claim more than a fleeting popularity, whereas the *fêtes foraines,* of which this *Foire de Neuilly* may be regarded as absolutely the most flagrant example, are a permanent and essential phase of French gaiety.

So let us stroll down the Avenue de Neuilly, this June evening, and observe how France (not Russia or England or America) takes its pleasure there. A charming scene you will call

it, no doubt, with the glow from a million lights reddening the trees and the stuccoed buildings and the very sky, and with innumerable flags flying, and a riot of motion everywhere, and hilarity expressed in laughter and in feminine shrieks and in all manner of caperings and practical jokes. As for the shows—why not try this one, by blue, this amazing affair labeled so enticingly "La Boxe Anglaise"?

Outside, on a tall platform, stands a row of terrible sluggers and wrestlers. They wear flesh-colored tights and bright jerseys alarmingly cut away to expose Herculean chests and shoulders. A barker recites their awful deeds and challenges the crowd to furnish volunteers brave enough to encounter them. He especially invites some lady to risk a bout with his lady wrestler, a thunderous dame of two hundred pounds or more. The crowd quakes. One by one, the demigods on the platform strut forward to defy the boldest. But now—ah, *messieurs,* the France is still the France! She has heroes yet. Within a brief space, all the demigods (including the demigoddess) have found volunteers prepared to do or die, and we rush for the ticket-window, eager to witness the combats between professionals and audacious amateurs.

The tent is soon packed. A young soldier strips to the waist, steps out on the mat, and wrestles a tremendous, big-muscled athlete five years older than himself and twenty kilos heavier and at even worse disadvantages than these, for the soldier continues to wear his red military trousers and his military boots, whereas his antagonist is dressed for the fray. Nevertheless, down goes the professional and up goes an ear-splitting cheer, and out come a pair of boxers—one a professional, the other a plumber who has volunteered—and punch heads gloriously with immense, fat gloves. This time it is the amateur who surrenders. And now—heaven help us!—the lady wrestler steps into the ring, a sight in her purple jersey and tights and with awful determination glaring from her eyes! We gasp, for a mere slip of a girl—twenty or thereabouts—has rashly undertaken to meet her.

She had a bicycle, this slip of a girl, and has brought it in with her. Yonder she stands, divesting herself of her dress-waist and then of her skirt. How coolly she goes about it—almost as if she were in the habit of stripping before a crowd! But fortunately she happens (by pure luck, of course!) to wear black knickers under her skirt and a black jersey under her dress-

waist—in which fairly decorous costume she tackles the lady wrestler.

Great sport, all this—so genuine and spontaneous and temperamental! But let us not visit "La Boxe Anglaise" a second time; for in that case we should see the same rash young soldier and the same hot-headed plumber and the same slip of a girl volunteering with the same fortuitous impetuosity, although a fortnight may have passed since we first made their acquaintance.

Or suppose we try the show called "The North Pole." It is delightful, really. It advertises "the sole survivors of the Expedition Peary," who, on inspection, turn out to be a seal, nine monkeys, and an amiable pelican.

Alas, we feel that we are not secure against imposture even at a *fête foraine!* After such glaring humbugs, we begin to suspect fraud when we notice the sign hung up over a two-cent gambling device: "Marvelous! Ten Players, Eleven Winners!" Indeed, we can hardly credit the declaration posted at the entrance to the lair of educated fleas, "Not a truant among them." We hesitate. But see—right before us—a dancing bear on a platform outside a wild animal show, and a most convincing orator

promising truly hair-lifting performances inside. We risk it.

Not unprofitably—oh, not at all unprofitably! Exactly as advertised, La Belle Fifi walks a tight-rope over a cage of roaring lions, with a *dompteur* in a dress suit down below to lash them with a whip and keep them leaping to and fro. And across the Avenue, in the rival wild beast show, le Capitain Lecoque beats that. Dauntlessly he rides his bicycle round and round a narrow track up above a den full of infuriated lions. Should he miss—by a hair's breadth—*whew!*

So there are honest shows, as well as swindling ones, in a *fête foraine;* and honest, likewise, are the hair-lifting, curly bamboo-slides called "cascades human," and equally honest the human roulette wheels, the "Russian mountains," the circle swings, the shooting galleries, and the perfectly marvelous and unheard-of gigantic merry-go-rounds, with their amazing architectural splendors, their steam organs, audible for a mile and more, and their bewildering array of rocking-horses, jumping cats, hippety-hoppy giraffes and glorious pink pigs.

To ride a pink pig on a deafening merry-go-round—what frivolity more genuinely and char-

acteristically French? And what more *fête forainey* than pigs—especially the gingerbread pigs for sale in a hundred booths? Invest, by all means, and insist on having your name written on the pig in sugar paste poured from a gay cornucopia. It is included in the bargain; for what says the notice? "One baptizes them at the minute."

Have I given you some faint idea of a Parisian street fair, some small, half-adequate notion of the hubbub, the confusion, the crowds, the jollity? I doubt it. Think of the wildest Midway, the craziest beach, the most turbulent amusement park, and absolutely the noisiest circus; then multiply by the biggest number you know, and the result is not it. It is not anything even remotely resembling it. For it—the incomparable, unutterable it—is a thing no mind on earth can possibly conceive without beholding, or more than half believe in even then.

But when you have beheld it and, so far as mortal can, believed in it, what does it tell you about French gaiety? This: That shows, originally the frolicsome incidents of a serious fair, have lived on after the serious fair has been supplanted by markets and shops; that French cities have never managed to suppress

the shows, nuisances though they have become; that the French climate permits the shows to rage unchecked the whole year round; that, given this opportunity, the showmen never cease bidding for business; and, finally, that their bids are not scorned, as why should they be?

And yet, if you demand the essential difference between our own ways and the ways of the French as exhibited at a *fête foraine,* I think you will agree with me that it is less a difference of temperament than a difference in the idea of what a street is for and especially what a business street is for.

You can't imagine a Coney Island on wheels let loose in lower Broadway or in State Street, Chicago, or in Washington Street, Boston. Were such a phenomenon to occur at all (and sometimes such phenomena do—at a corn-carnival, for instance) it would victimize some small town, merely, or only the "residential section" of a large one. But in a French city there is practically no "residential section," just as there is practically no "business section." Shops are everywhere and people live in flats above them. Consequently, every street lays claim, more or less successfully, to trees and flowers. Every street sets up, more or less successfully, to be a place where citizens stroll for

pleasure. Every street has its cafés, with its hundreds of tables and chairs on the sidewalks in front of them; and, given its way, every street would boldly aspire to the Punch and Judy shows, the merry-go-rounds, and the unnumbered joyous swings that enliven a French park and even invade the aristocratic Champs-Élysées. For Frenchmen know nothing of our American idea that one part of a city should be given over to trade, the other part to enjoyment. And this, I suppose, is what gives French tourists their singular notions of American life. In the business section of an American city, your Frenchman sees no trees, no flowers, no sidewalk drinking-places, no arrangements for pleasure. "Mon Dieu!" he cries. "These Americans care only for money-making!"

With the French idea of what a street is for, it becomes fairly easy to avoid jumping to extravagant conclusions when one beholds a *fête foraine* with all its exuberance, its frivolity, its gaiety. Especially, if one stops to reflect how few other gaieties are in progress, at least during the afternoon. In the American city where I live, I can point to scores of amusement resorts simply crowded to the bursting point every afternoon—vaudevilles, burlesque houses, moving picture shows, and so on—and

their immense audiences are drawn almost wholly from the working class. Can I do the same in Paris—that gay, gay Paris of legend? Why, bless you, there are not half as many Parisians riding pink pigs, and as for afternoon "spectacles popular," blessed if you can find one!

The singular thing about "gay Paree," then, is just that. The gay Parisians work. They know how to take an hour off, on occasion. When they do, they know how to stand on their heads with a merry disregard for the spectators, if not an actual delight in being observed. And yet, comparing the two races, setting fact against fact, institution against institution, custom against custom, and circumstance against circumstance, I sometimes wonder if we are not the frivolous race, the French the serious one.

Some day, unless Americans begin to exhibit more convincing symptoms of the stern, laborious, over-practical sobriety with which legend so generally credits them, I shall not be greatly surprised if a French Cowper pays his respects to American gravity by writing,

> "The Yankee, easy, debonair, and brisk,
> Give him his lass, his fiddle, and his frisk,
> Is always happy, reign whoever may,
> And laughs the sense of mis'ry far away."

## CHAPTER III

### *Their Cleverness*

THERE is nothing more curious than nations' opinions of nations. In this matter of cleverness, for instance. You may travel the world over, and everywhere you will hear the French called clever. As if the English—or the Germans, say—were not clever. But when you come to look at the thing closely, you see that the nations have agreed to credit the French with a peculiar, *sui generis,* freak cleverness, distinctive in its frivolity, its superficiality, and at the same time its inspired ingenuity. It differs from English and from German cleverness in being at once lighter and more subtle. And it is not a gift other nations envy. Even its admirable points seem offset with too many deficiencies.

Is not this the common, world-wide estimate of French cleverness? I believe I have stated it

fairly—not to the French, of course, but to their critics and detractors—and now I mean to show, if I can, that the world-wide estimate is singularly lacking in justice.

Suppose we begin by considering the charge of intellectual frivolity. It is true that in France "everything ends in a song"—true, also, that what a French potentate or demigod most fears is a joke at his expense, since a joke, in France, will sometimes outweigh vastly more serious considerations. Moreover, it is true that the ability to sparkle in conversation is regarded in France as a by no means pitiable trait. Nowhere is repartee more applauded—by all save its victims. Take the famous case of the Frenchman who dared talk back to Victor Hugo.

Hugo was holding forth at a dinner party during the siege of Paris. "Ah, dear friends," said he, "I have at last conceived a plan to save Paris. I, Victor Hugo, will put on my uniform and go out, alone and unarmed, against the foe. I shall be killed. But when the Germans see that they have killed Victor Hugo, it will be the end of the siege."

Whereupon, a guest remarked, "For you!"

Hugo's rage knew no limits, for he perfectly understood the perils in that sort of fun. Many

a reputation has been demolished, in France, by less violent wit than this. And very possibly a nation so prone to worship brilliancy and so willing to be overpersuaded by it deserves some little condemnation. Possibly that nation is guilty of frivolity. And yet which is more frivolous, really—for a nation to be unduly influenced by a dazzling, though trivial, cleverness, or to be unduly influenced by platitudes? I think of the Parliamentary bromidioms in certain countries I could name; I think of the campaign claptrap, here at home, and our eagerness to run after almost any utterly commonplace spouter of truisms; and I ask myself if the French adoration of sparkle can be half as frivolous as that!

But even the taunt of intellectual frivolity has its flattering implications, since at least it takes for granted the existence of intellect. And that, you know, is something. Many a country owns up to possessing whole classes—perhaps even a majority among its people—who cannot be called intellectually frivolous because they cannot be accused of intellect in any form whatsoever. To my mind, the remarkable thing in France is not the frivolity of intellect, now and then and perhaps too often, but the presence of intellect almost everywhere. Yes, and the pres-

ence of culture. To have knowledge, to have taste, to have a keen, insatiable relish for ideas —this, in France, is no rarity.

Just a single illustration. My audacious Cousin Mollie took it into her head to learn French millinery, so as to be able ever after to trim her own hats, though I suspect that the fun of the thing was a still stronger incentive. Accordingly, she spent several weeks as apprentice in a gorgeous establishment in the Rue de la Paix, where she worked elbow to elbow with the charming little *midinettes.* They were concierges' daughters, for the most part. They corresponded exactly to the class of girl who, in America, informs you, between munches at her chewing-gum, that "George he says to me, he says." But the *midinettes* had other interests in life. They talked books—the newest works of the very greatest French authors. Or they discussed their visits to the Louvre. And when they sang (Mollie reported that they often sang at their work) it was not to echo the latest "rag" from the silliest musical comedy. Instead, they sang snatches from grand opera.

Now, all this was typical, and you have only to open the ordinary French newspaper to observe the amazing popularization of intelligence and culture in France and the editor's convic-

tion that, whatever else may ail the French mind, it is not frivolous. There are yellow papers in France. There are Americanized papers in France. But the fact remains that the average French newspaper presupposes a reader too serious to care for what, in America, we call "news." The crimes, the accidents, the scandals, and the trashy gossip that fill our papers to the exclusion of very nearly everything else—these have a mere column of paragraphs in a French paper of the same grade. The editor "heads" them *"Faits Divers"* and gives them an obscure place on an inside page.

This strikes the American sojourner as outrageously funny journalism. He wants "news"—for instance, "Babe Bites Bull-Dog," "Thousands Await Guessing Contest," "McGilligan Confident He Will Whip McGooligan," or "Fresh Clew Sought in Hat-Pin Mystery." To a Frenchman, however, this passion for "news" is unutterably frivolous and so is the stamp of mind that sees "news" in such trivial gossip. Suppose it were all true about the babe and the bull-dog and the rest; what would it matter, even then? And what does it matter that Messrs. Brown, Jones, Smith and Perkins ushered last evening at the Queer Sticks' Ball? What does it matter that Messrs. White, Blake,

and Sawyer have been elected to the board of governors of the Order of Immaculate Mud-Turtles, or that "Spike" Blood has been arrested once more, or that the incredibly obscure Mrs. Wicks has obtained a divorce, or that a loss of $125 was occasioned by the fifteen-minute conflagration in Thompson and Barton's back shed?

Now, I am aware that another motive besides respect for his readers' serious-mindedness prevents a French editor's serving up anything like the usual American truck-load of inanities. True, he addresses a less frivolous public. But he is also affected by the financial side of his profession. He must make his subscribers, not his advertisers, pay for his paper. Consequently, he produces a little paper and has no temptation to stuff it with rubbish in order to accommodate advertisers with unlimited "space next pure reading matter." Happily, advertisers are few and timid and are an all but negligible factor in French journalism.

With restricted space, then, and with a public contemptuous of what Americans term "news," the French editor becomes a purveyor of ideas. He becomes a distributor of wisdom. You read his paper, not to learn that a certain nonentity has been fined for speeding or that some fellow

you never heard of is appointed seventh-assistant-water-inspector, but because a particularly eminent Academician contributes a column and a half of pure genius and because such interests as art, music, literature, the drama, science, and world politics are treated not only by authoritative specialists, but by writers of the highest charm. Thus, reading the morning paper in France becomes very nearly as much of an intellectual delight as opening, say, the *Atlantic Monthly* in America.

And meanwhile France completely outdoes us at producing serious magazines and supporting them. Here, we have the *Atlantic* and the *North American Review* every month, and also the *Forum*. In France, there are ever so many more of the important unillustrated reviews, and they appear, not monthly, but fortnightly, and thrive in a country with less than half our population. Moreover, it appears that the serious book, so sadly neglected here, enjoys a really very gratifying popularity in France, perhaps because French publishers issue books in paper covers and at a relatively low cost. If one wants a book bound, one takes it to the *relieur* around the corner and he puts on the cover one selects.

All in all, then, I am inclined to credit French

cleverness with much more sobriety and weight and downright solidity than it is generally supposed to possess. Indeed, I sometimes feel that it may lay claim to a quite considerable depth, as well—or at least to an effort to attain depth; and the mere existence of such an effort, however futile in the main, is a sufficient retort to the charge of frivolity.

Now, there are two ways of attaining depth, intellectually. The Germans dig. They proceed with incredible patience. You have doubtless heard of the German who sat down with a pipe and a stein and a lump of clay, and stayed there forty years, at the end of which time he could read the inscription on the clay.

I am not insisting that no Frenchman would do that. There are French army officers whose diligence in study is a horror to think of. Among French university students one finds a perfectly appalling capacity for work. At need, any Frenchman can dig. Perhaps he can dig as patiently as a German. But I doubt if he can dig as willingly. To get to the bottom of a subject he prefers to employ an X-ray.

It is impossible to live long in any intimate contact with the French mind without observing its insistence on cutting through mere surface facts to the principles that underlie them. In

conversation, in writing, in lecturing or preaching, this is always agreeably evident. A Frenchman tries to get down to the stratum of "general ideas." Sure (or seemingly sure) of principles, he builds up from those. Sometimes, he is rather too systematic about it—too ready to establish an "ism" and become an "ist." Sometimes he attempts orderly procedure where, owing to the limited and very fragmentary data we possess, a certain degree of disorder appears to inhere in the very nature of things. But this much I claim for him: if superficiality results from his ways of thinking, it is not because he has failed to go deep enough, but because he has gone a lot deeper than the gods intended he should.

And I suspect it is also because his cleverness is too human. As long as a subject interests him and as long as it lends itself to artistic treatment, he will follow it with insatiable zest. When it bores him, and seems destined to become a source of infernal boredom to others—that is to say, when it presents its stretches of confoundedly monotonous driness, as practically every subject does, sooner or later—then I rather imagine you will do better to engage a German.

But, while I consider a German solider (be-

cause stolider) than a Frenchman, I must add that I think the Frenchman fully as solid as an Englishman, mentally, and very much solider than the usual American. Compare the French educational system with the American, compare its results with those we derive from ours, and you will conclude that if possibly there are nations qualified to poke fun at what they call French superficiality, America is certainly not one of those nations.

It remains, now, to consider that other side of French cleverness—the side I have called its "inspired ingenuity." Long, long before the hero of "A Sentimental Journey" made his famous declaration, "They order this matter better in France," the world had made up its mind that the French possessed an almost uncanny aptitude for accomplishing the next to impossible. The idea persists, even to-day. Speak of French *finesse,* French craftsmanship, French cunning and audacity and determination, and people nod their heads, though perhaps not too admiringly.

They admire the results—such, for instance, as the Suez Canal or the latest monoplane or some marvelous chemical astonishment like radium—but there is invariably a certain condescension in their tone. They act as if the

achievement were a bit like that of a juggler or trick acrobat—meretricious, possibly, or at least traceable to the knack fairly easily acquired by fellows who were "freaks" to start with. Enthusiastically as such onlookers applaud French triumphs, they would think it a terrible calamity to awake some morning and find themselves French. To their way of thinking, it would be as shocking, almost, as for a man to wake up and find himself a tenor.

Well, I must admit that French cleverness has amazed us with a really very impressive array of marvels. For the best microscope, the best stethoscope, the best aeroplane, the best automobile, you must apply to the French. It was the French who built the tallest tower in the world (a toy originally, and now a wireless station sending messages to Africa) and it was the French who built the first great trans-isthmian waterway and came near building the second also. It was the French who erected the first great Gothic cathedrals. Everything difficult; everything like breeding tailless sheep; everything colossal and astounding and unheard-of the French will accomplish. Clever—*n'est-ce-pas?* But can the French sell a two-cent stamp? Can they deposit a twenty-franc cheque in their own savings bank? Can they

construct a watering-pot, or a stove, or a garden-chair, or oars for a boat? *Ah, oui!* They can. And yet I defy you to discover a race who will go at these perfectly simple tasks with less cleverness—or, for that matter, with fewer grains of even primitive intelligence.

I desire, let us say, to invest two sous in a postage stamp. Innocently I repair to the nearest branch post-office. There I see a broad, high counter running around three sides of an enormous room. Every six feet or so, a bronze pillar on the counter bears a set of placards announcing the duties of the officials behind it. Oh, complicated, multifarious duties! Here they cash money orders, receive cablegrams, register letters, and sell postage stamps at wholesale. At the next bronze pillar, they receive telegrams, issue money orders, and take charge of parcels. At a third they deal in parcels, cablegrams, telegrams, special delivery letters, money orders, and—*vive la France!*—postage stamps at retail. *So* soon! Wonderful!

But several citizens are there before me. I wait while a man with a money order identifies himself by exhibiting the envelope in which the money order came and another envelope from the same source "anteriorly recued." I wait

while an official examines a despatch for the cable, hunts up the address in a folio, advises the "suppression" of two or three needless words, and takes the sender's money, bites it, rings it, has a colleague examine it, and finally hands out the change. Then I wait while à third buys stamps. Then, at last, I am enabled to accomplish the investment of my two sous.

A few experiences of this sort, and you learn never to buy a French postage-stamp in a French post-office. Instead, you apply to the tobacconist (so called, as if the weed purveyed by the French government were somehow related to tobacco) and there you probably obtain your *timbre-poste.*

Or again, further to observe French cleverness attempting an easy, simple task and making it a horror, suppose I try to deposit a little cheque for twenty francs to my own account at the nearest French bank. I approach one of nine receiving tellers. I wait upon his leisure. When bidden, I endorse the cheque with my name, my full address and the date. I stick on two stamps. Across each stamp I write my name, Paris, and the date. The teller requires me to sign a book. Then he fills out a blank receipt, vanishes, makes an entry on the

books (correctly, perhaps), returns, gives me a pink ticket, signs the receipt, ambles to the far end of the building to get the receipt countersigned, passes it to the paying teller, and—attends to the next depositor. When the paying teller bawls a French parody on my name, I obtain my receipt for the twenty francs and depart exhausted.

As it is now some days since I have assisted at this ceremony, I may have omitted some portions of the ritual. If so, forgive me, and accept a safe and sane generalization. With my hand on my heart, I declare that in the time it takes to deposit twenty francs to one's own account in a French banking house, any bright young man should be able to secure a position in an American bank, rise to the presidency thereof, and abscond with the funds. At least, such is the impression left by a hundred harrowing experiences.

And just observe (as a further example of French cleverness) how the Paris tramway system can rise to an emergency! You know its usual methods, of course. When some mad hope bids you seek a 'bus or street-car, you repair to the nearest station. Outside the station you see a row of pads, each composed of tickets,

hung upon the wall. You help yourself. The ticket you draw bears a number and secures you your turn to board a car.

First vehicle arrives. No stop. Sign on vehicle says, "Full." Second vehicle arrives. Same sign. Third vehicle arrives, and stops. Conductor counts aloud—"Three thousand, eight hundred, four-score, eleven; three thousand, eight hundred, four-score twelve; three thousand, eight hundred, four-score, thirteen." Bravo! Three thousand, eight hundred, four-score, thirteen is your number. You step aboard. And when ultimately the other claimants for vacant seats receive permission to enter, the vehicle is ready to start for the next station.

Admirable, this! Except during rush hours, it works delightfully, with but slight delay and absolutely preventing the overcrowding of cars. Yet when traffic is heavy—oh good gracious! You stand up forever at your station—in a pouring rain it may be—waiting for a car that has a seat for you. Which is a worse infliction, really, than standing in a car; for when you stand in a car, you are at least moving.

Now, I suppose the excitable French populace has to be held in check, ordinarily, by a system as drastic as all this, but it does seem to me that

there are emergencies where the rules might be temporarily held in abeyance. Think of three hundred thousand people at Vincennes trying to get home from the army maneuvers, and fifty big two-story trams standing empty, and hundreds and hundreds of Parisians in an interminable line, waiting their turn to obtain "numéros" and after that waiting their turn to board a car, and the trams coming up to the station at long intervals, slowly, exasperatingly, *one by one!*

It was a singular comment on French turbulence. Had the crowds been half as ungovernable as Paris thinks them, there would have been a stampede for the trams that night and nothing but dragoons with drawn sabers could have enforced the rules. As it was, nothing happened except a great shrugging of shoulders, unlimited gesticulation, and a relapse into the patient, poky, bovine meekness which is the most astonishing, as well as the most unfailing, characteristic of the French race.

Nevertheless, the incident showed the common French deficiency—lack of cleverness. It was what we expect of Germans. It was—well, of a piece with the stupidity that shaped the oars for the boats on the lakes in the Bois de Boulogne. Made of oak, incredibly heavy and

twice too long, those oars have the slimmest conceivable blades, while at the inner end they are just long enough to bump, not long enough to cross. And that for the boat they call a "canoe"!

But *que voulez-vous?* This was no worse than the watering pot in our garden—built so solidly that it was heavier empty than an American watering pot is full; or than the garden chairs—made of cast iron though they were intended to be moved about; or than half the French lamps—so constructed that they retain what little light they produce; or than the perfectly ridiculous and outlandish French stoves.

Oh, those stoves of ours in the *Quartier Latin!* We used to say they were stove-pipe hats made over into stoves, so small they were. And imagine a stove fed from the top through a hole so tiny that you tucked in the coals with your fingers one at a time! For it was hopeless to pour from the hod, in any case, as the hod was a straight-up-and-down affair like a dinner-pail.

Convenient? *Certainement pas!* But when did French cleverness ever consider convenience worth striving for? Think of absolutely the least convenient way of doing a thing, and these dear, lovable French will not do it that way;

instead, they will sit up nights inventing a way more inconvenient still.

Vast loss of sleep it must have cost them to invent the French house, with all its marvelous impracticalities, outside and in. That high stone wall next the sidewalk, for instance, making every house a fort; and the gate—the heavy, forbidding iron gate, opened by servants who trot ever and ever so far in the open air—even though it is raining *curés*—when some caller rings for admittance; and the grotesque arrangement of rooms, so that you travel the maximum distance whenever you want anything; and—at least as a general rule—the absence of water-pipes or central heating—and the consequent necessity of carrying water by hand to every bedroom and carrying coal and fagots as well.

Strange architects they have in France, you would say, and assuredly it is not surprising if one must regard as at all typical a thing that happened fairly recently at the Beaux-Arts. The students submitted designs for a restaurant; no ordinary restaurant, *parbleu;* a restaurant *de luxe;* a restaurant very much of the Pré Catalan type—exquisite, magnificent, and altogether ravishing. Now among the students there chanced to be a whimsical genius who de-

signed his restaurant so charmingly that the waiters, on their way from the kitchen to the dining-room, must inevitably collide with arriving and departing guests in the grand foyer. Perfect! Inconvenience at its height! In short the very essence and epitome of inconvenience—to which triumph, naturally, the First Prize was enthusiastically awarded.

Quite typical this may have been, I suspect. For it was a Frenchman who designed that miracle of discomfort and absurdity, the French bathtub. Enormously high, it can be clambered into only with serious difficulty, and dire is the ensuing misery, as the plug occupies the exact center of its bottom. The arrangement may have its advantages, perhaps, for something like ninety-odd per cent. of the French bath-tubs are installed in public bath-houses, and, theoretically at least, a patron should be given a motive to hop out promptly and make room for his successors, who, theoretically, are clamoring madly for baths. Practically, however,—but let us not press the point, for such is perhaps not the object, since the plug, with a string attached and a cork to float the string, refuses to be completely removed and requires you to spend a *petit quart d'heure* holding the string in order to empty the tub. To be sure, one may

with patience succeed in tying the string to a faucet, but I cannot believe that that is the usual custom. It seems much too convenient.

For you really can't imagine convenience in France. It is the land of the *concierge,* the land where a human being takes the place of a directory on the wall inside the entrance to an office-building, the land where, instead of the rows of bells and telephones or speaking-tubes in the vestibule of an apartment house, they have a *concierge* to tell you who lives how many flights up and warn you against the elevator, if by any stroke of luck there happens to be any elevator. Whenever France can make you hunt up a human being, instead of relying upon a tablet on the wall or a telephone or a speaking tube, France does—that is, unless you chance to be a very distinguished guest of the nation, as Prof. Barrett Wendell was. Actually, they allowed him to consult the card-catalogue in a "public" library. Without this indulgence, he would have been obliged to go and have a personal set-to with the librarian every time he wanted to know if the library contained a certain book.

And speaking of libraries, I had a talk one morning with a Frenchman who was about to sail for Boston. Naturally, I advised him to go

to see the mural paintings by Puvis de Chavannes in the Boston Public Library. Said my Frenchman, with great *empressement*, "How does one obtain permission to enter it?"

But when you have considered all the other astounding inconveniences in France—the ineptitudes of a French post-office, the weird ceremonials of a French bank, the egregiously cumbersome ritual required when one wants to take a tram, and the shocking malformations of the French house, the French stove, the French coal-hod, the French row-boat, the French library, the French everything, almost—are they not fairly outmatched for stupidity and downright baffling horror by the French money?

It would perhaps be unfair to blame the French for the bewildering prevalence of counterfeit notes and coins. At all events it would be a slander to say that the French people as a whole approve the scandal and encourage it, or that the bogus money is coined and circulated in order to swindle foreigners. The truth is, one must lodge the blame with the existing social order, which breeds discontent, which in turn breeds Anarchists, who, in their secret lairs, make war upon society. It is they, in the main, who mint counterfeit money, regarding this as a mild form of protest, which "injures no one."

Diligently though the police seek them out, they are too slippery and too multitudinous to be altogether suppressed. And you make an enormous mistake if you think French people look upon their machinations with anything like indifference. For French people are the chief sufferers. Though rarely gulled, the fear of being victimized keeps them constantly on the watch.

Oh, the abominable nuisance of eyeing each separate coin, and ringing it or biting it! Oh, the endless fuss and trouble of holding up every fifty-franc note to see if a water-mark medallion will show in the light, or marking the margin with silver to see if it leaves a black line! Considering the amount of profitless labor the risks of fraud entail, would you not suppose that the French would learn to defend themselves against the perfectly remediable nuisance of allowing the coins of several foreign countries to pass current in France? It is this, even more than the dread of spurious money, that makes every cashier stop to cast an eagle eye upon each particular coin. He must determine if actually it came from one of the countries—Italy, Belgium, Greece, let us say—whose money is received in France—or whether, perhaps, it may be some unwelcome stray shilling or mark.

But, bless you! They are an easy-going race, the French—never too much in haste and never troubled if the slow, complicated, awkward way of doing things requires the employment of seven or eight additional pairs of hands. And they are wasteful. True, they have an almost magical aptitude for utilizing second-hand bread-crusts and cigarette-ends; they can make fortunes out of old shoes and old hats; they can eat what other nations throw away; they can "make economies" where other nations run up debts; but when it comes to the vastly more important economy, the saving of hours and minutes, they waste time, which is wages, which are money.

Suppose, for instance, that you have just purchased a linen collar—value sixty-fifteen centimes, in a great department store—the Bon Marché, perhaps, or the illustrious Printemps. Your salesman escorts you personally to a cashier. He tells the cashier what you have bought and the price. The cashier writes this out in full. You pay. The cashier examines your money, patiently, coin by coin. Meanwhile the collar has been wrapped up. The salesman presents it to you, bids you an elaborate farewell, and returns to his counter.

Oh, jolly system! It necessitates an extra cashier, every little way, and it necessitates goodness knows how many extra salesmen. Moreover, it is a perfectly representative exhibit of French cleverness. Prosperous as the French are, think how enormously more prosperous they would be, could they but learn some slight respect for method, for convenience, for the saving of time, and curb their passion for paying unnecessary wages to unnecessary employees. Why should it take three blue-bloused Frenchmen to drive one horse? Why should it take a small army of officials behind counters to operate an exceedingly insignificant branch banking establishment? And why, with all this inflation of pay-rolls and overmanning of staffs, should the French public still suffer incredible delays, incommensurable botheration, and be so hopelessly tangled up in needless and ridiculous red tape?

These intricate idiocies become the more amazing when you realize that they are products of the same French mind that gave us the Gothic cathedrals, the Suez Canal, the Eiffel Tower, and the world's best microscopes, stethoscopes, automobiles, and aeroplanes. A strange, strange mind—technical, not practical,

and bringing to pass this most singular of anomalies: in France, everything easy is done badly, while everything difficult and all but impossible is done superbly well.

## CHAPTER IV

### *In Trilby Land*

YES, the French genius is technical, not practical, and all the easy things are done badly in France and all the difficult things done well. But when I closed the last chapter with this not entirely fantastic generalization, I seemed to see Taffy and the Laird and Little Billee rise up arm in arm to protest, "Why have you dwelt so long upon this technical, albeit unpractical, French cleverness, without saying one single solitary word about French art?"

*Eh, bien, messieurs! Vous avez raison.* Why, indeed?

And yet it was a fortunate omission, leaving a whole capacious chapter for that most enchanting of subjects. Not too much room, however. For, while art is very nearly a negligible factor in American life, it is a simply enormous factor in French life. Art proclaims itself. Not

only do you observe the slanting glass skylights that denote the studios, you also observe artists, anywhere and everywhere—in the Louvre, copying old masters; about the streets, with their camp-stools and easels, and in the parks, of course; and it is strange if you fail to find one or two making sketches from life at the chicken show in the Grand Palais or the Exposition Canine in the Tuileries garden. They haunt the great Parisian zoo in the Jardin des Plantes, and you know it, though the authorities let them in at hours when the public is not admitted. Once I saw a painter of horses establishing his open-air atelier next an omnibus station. When an omnibus arrived, he would use its nags as models, and paint furiously. Then, till the next omnibus came up, he would rest.

And even when the artists are not at work they are delightfully conspicuous, thanks to the marvelous beards they affect, and their dangling locks and huge black sombreros and snug, collarless jackets and immense trousers appallingly big at the hips and gathered in tight at the ankles. Stunning chaps—if you like that sort.

But it is by their works, even more than by their ubiquitous gay prevalence, that you recognize the really serious percentage of the French

population that has gone in professionally for art. Even in small tradesmen's apartments and the shabbier French *pensions,* you notice pictures—originals, in crayon, wash, or even oils—and wonder how they got there. Oh, so simply! Everybody's brother or uncle or cousin is a painter, and everybody who harbors boarders harbors artists, of whom a few in the course of years can be counted upon to discharge their indebtedness by surrendering certain gems of art in lieu of cash. In fact, so extensive is the pursuit of painting as a business in France that you will very probably be suspected of it, yourself.

Naturally, this would appear to show that the technical, albeit unpractical, cleverness of the French found a natural outlet in the studios, and this is no doubt true. Yet a mere stroll through the artists' quarter of Paris—the general neighborhood of the Rue Vavin, I mean, close to the Luxembourg Garden—will make you wonder if perhaps French leanings toward art are not oftentimes an easy-going acceptance of the path of least resistance.

Not only will you find an art school in every street, you will find that every art school advertises a sketch class. Plainly announced on a tablet next the entrance, you see, "Croquis,

modèle vivant, 4½ heures à 7, 50 centimes." In other words, a life class, open from half-past four every afternoon till seven, admission 10 cents, and no questions asked. The tyro, the ignoramus, the trifler, even, can walk in; "make a noise like an artist"—i.e., attempt to draw; have his pick of four studios and four models; and peg away serenely for two hours and a half. On departing, he presents a French dime to the janitor in corduroys at the door.

Is it any miracle, then, that hosts and hosts of young Frenchmen try their skill at drawing from life, discover they have talent, and go wild with enthusiasm, counting all other pursuits as not worth bothering about? In France, the life class is not regarded as "pizen." Nobody assumes that a student must make himself immune by dismally drawing from casts before he can be allowed to draw from the living model. Tell a Frenchman the Puritanical restrictions that surround a life class in America and he bursts into a great roar—that is, when he has sufficiently recovered from the shock to laugh at all.

So nothing is easier than an entrance into Trilby Land—for instance, at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière. Passing through the

Rue de la Grande Chaumière (Big Cottage Street, by interpretation) one observes a profusion of sombreros and wild beards flocking in at the entrance to an exceedingly commonplace brick building. In an American small town you might mistake it for the "College of Commerce."

Before entering, let us pause to read the tablet next the door. It offers various attractions —classes in painting, in modeling, and in drawing; living models, invariably, and illustrious artists to give instruction. Finally, our *croquis* class.

Inside, a narrow, shabby, ill-lighted corridor is hung with facsimiles of drawings by the old masters. A door at the left bears the label "Nu." But it is not yet half-past four, and the model for this down-stairs atelier will only begin posing at five. We pass through the corridor, where men and girl students stand chatting or, seated on a wretched sofa, compare sketch-books. Others are on their way up-stairs. We follow them, up past the restaurant to the third floor, where the studio in which a male model will pose is still deserted. There are signs of approaching activity, however, in the next atelier, whose door is ticketed "Costume." But

the crowds of men and girls are mostly flocking into the room at the end of the hall—Trilby Land in very truth.

It is a dingy, dusty, wobegone room, with a skylight now dark, and several clusters of electric lights with tissue paper shades. On shelves along the walls, a number of unframed paintings —figure studies all—and a chart of the human skeleton. Beneath these, great, careless stacks of easels.

Trilby's platform, with its dirty, ragged carpet and rickety lounge, and its tall, narrow, white screens for reflecting light, suggests the meanest of dowdy boardinghouse rooms combined with the den of a third-rate photographer. Only one accessory marks it for what it is. I refer, of course, to the little inclined plane for Trilby's foot to rest upon in certain rather difficult poses.

For us students, there are three double rows of rush-bottomed stools—low ones to sit on, high ones to prop our sketch books on, or vice versa. And what a sight we are—old codgers with straggling gray beards, girls of eighteen or less, typical French artists in their corduroy regalia, maiden ladies in spectacles, perhaps a soldier or two in uniform, and several rosy-faced boys of the high-school age or possibly

still younger. *Mon Dieu,* what a menagerie!

And now comes Trilby—a plain-faced, stupid, utterly prosaic young person—of the mill-girl type—dressed as any underpaid saleswoman might be. Proceeding to the front of the room, she throws off her clothing as unconcernedly as if no one were looking on, and mounts the platform. Twenty-five minutes she poses. Then a voice says, "C'est l'heure," meaning, "Time." During the next five minutes, Trilby encourages the stove; we students get down from our perches to stretch our legs and ease our spines; some light cigarettes (despite the notice, "Défense de fumer pendant les heures de travail"); and there is a considerable stirring about from studio to studio. For none of the models repeats a pose and none of the students expects to finish a picture. We are only sketching. Consequently some of us feel that a change of model may be even more to our advantage than the inevitable change of pose.

Why not try the room marked "Costume" and see what that offers? Delightful opportunities, at times—monks, opera-dancers, peasants, mothers with babes in their arms, oh, all manner of picturesque types admirably "put on"!

Or, if we like, we can settle down in the next

atelier, where a male model, superb in his glorious nudity, is preparing to pose leaning on a staff. And by this time the large studio downstairs is open and crowded and another Trilby is ready to pose there—perhaps a more stationary young creature than ours. But even if she, too, betrays the usual inability to hold a pose unchanged, we have further choices. For an additional dime, we can visit Colarossi's, a few doors away down the Rue de la Grande Chaumière, or slip round to the fine new art-school in the Boulevard Montparnasse or those in other streets hard by. For the quarter teems with studios, with models, with roving students, and with artists.

Very romantic it sounds, I imagine, and quite outrageously Bohemian, so startling are the charms that distance lends to fact. But were you to step inside a French art school and prowl from atelier to atelier, you would be impressed with a kind of Quaker-meeting seriousness and silence, as well as with a singular decorum, almost ascetic in its indifference to sex. Banishing practically all the conventional proprieties as out of place and foolish, the institution establishes proprieties of its own. There is a surprising wholesomeness about the place, and even about Trilby herself.

Child of models and taught to pose nude almost from her babyhood, Trilby is completely devoid of self-consciousness, and what wonder? You are not ashamed to display your face. Well, then! Trilby is all face.

And decidedly bored with her profession. If I can read her little mind, while she poses, it is saying, "Oh, when will this stupid, tiresome, back-breaking job be done with?"

All in all, then, my admiration knows no bounds when I read how the heroes of fiction fall head and heels in love with Trilby's beauty and charm and bewitching cleverness and sparkle. Here and there in the studios of illustrious artists—up on the Butte Montmartre, let us say—there is perhaps a Trilby who justifies our novelists' ingenious fancies. If you drop in at the Moulin de la Galette, some Sunday afternoon, you will see amazingly pretty girls among the dancers, and suspect that not a few of them are models—which may possibly be true, though more likely you will find them at work next morning as *mannequins* or *midinettes* in the great Parisian dressmaking establishments. In any case, you show a most extraordinary credulity if you expect to see such exquisite little creatures posing in any of the studios made famous by Taffy and Little Billee and the Laird.

A beauty can pick and choose. Naturally, she prefers a private studio, with its comforts, to the dingy, dirty, and too often draughty art-schools.

But although the romance of the ateliers dwindles, the better one comes to know them, the happy fact remains that they fling wide their doors to all comers, and that even had they nothing more to offer than the sketch class, they would be making daily converts to the delights of art.

Naturally, I am not unaware that the sketch class has its shortcomings. A twenty-five minute pose, never repeated, precludes the possibility of one's jotting down much more than outlines and hastily recorded shadows. Besides, one must work by artificial light—always a disadvantage, as the model is lighted from two or three different angles at once. Yet the common complaint, that we sketchers worked without instruction, has never seemed to me particularly well-founded. What, pray, does the instruction amount to in the organized and a trifle more expensive classes? As the saying goes, it amounts to a little old gentleman with a red rosette in his buttonhole, who comes once a week, squints at your work, remarks, "Pas mal," and trots away. It is from the other

students, not from the instructors, that one learns.

How cheap it comes, this art-instruction, and what jolly good times go with it—what jokes, what pranks, what jubilant festivities! Of all professions, art is the easiest to embark upon and incomparably the best fun. For college life in France is largely devoid of frolics. Imagine an American college bereft of its dormitories, its fraternities, its glee club, and its athletic association, and you have a fair idea of a French university. An occasional rebellion in the law school, an occasional outbreak of professor-baiting in the medical school, an occasional *monome,* as they call a student shindy—and that is about all. Half the undergraduates at the Sorbonne live at home with their parents. Half the other half are wild foreigners—Russians, mostly—and oh, it is a miserable existence they make out. So, when you see students carousing in the cafés of the *Quartier Latin,* you must take it that they are exceptions—indeed, quite rare exceptions, on the whole, and a disgrace to their serious, hard-working, and perhaps over-ambitious confrères.

Whereas life at the Beaux-Arts, on the contrary, has its pranks and capers from the very start. "*Un nouveau! un nouveau!*" cries the

class, the moment a new student enters. They crowd around him, eager to begin his education. "Dear friend," they say, "the first requisite for a great artist is a sound and beautiful body. Strip off your clothes and let the doctor have a look at you."

The boy obeys, trembling while the doctor (a student, of course) goes over him with an eagle eye, pointing out defect after defect. Each time, one of the students marks the offending spot with a blob of bright paint, till our poor *nouveau* is soon one mass of gorgeous and variegated coloring from head to foot. Whereupon a cry goes up, "Save yourself! The inspector!"

In a frenzy of mock terror, the students hustle the *nouveau* into a corner, pile easels and canvases on top of him, and admit the inspector, who, as you have surmised, is a student like the rest. Wild tumult ensues, and it is borne in upon the *nouveau* that the occasion would be pleasanter, all round, if he should stand treat for the crowd.

Such, at least, is the old-fashioned, orthodox ceremony of initiating a *nouveau,* though I must add that it appears, by what I hear, to be undergoing some very dismal modifications. They no longer haze Americans, and sometimes the haz-

ing of young Frenchmen lacks the ferocity it had of yore. I am told that the students at one of the subsidiary ateliers of the Beaux-Arts actually begin warming the water for his bath before they begin covering a *nouveau* with wet paint.

Nevertheless, sufficient monkeyshines remain —processions, war-dances, masquerades, and, for students of architecture, the thrilling *charette* races at the close of a competition.

You know the *charette?* It is a high, two-wheeled hand-cart, with thills in front and behind, so that half a dozen men can pull and push at once—with what speed you can well imagine if you reflect that the students wait till the very last moment to finish their drawings, so that when they are finally loaded aboard *charettes* at the various subsidiary schools it is a mad dash the boys make of it to the Beaux-Arts, whooping and yelling as they go. Indeed, I know hardly any scene more ingenuously frantic than that in the Rue Bonaparte when the time for a competition is all but up and the *charettes* come tearing headlong into the great court, fetching the completed designs.

They are simply brimming over with fun, those lads. Tradition as well as temperament requires it, for the days of the famous Gérôme

are not forgotten. A wondrously arrayed celebrity was Gérôme—in fact, *un dandy*—so one day, while he was criticizing the students' work, a young scamp slipped behind the master and added a touch of Eighteenth Century elegance by painting his high heels vermilion. While "the master" was busy giving instruction indoors, a student went out into the court and carefully gilded all four hoofs of Gérôme's *cheval.* Presently, out came Gérôme, still preoccupied with thoughts of art, and sprang into the saddle without noticing. And great was the sensation along the Quai Voltaire a moment later. Ah, *messieurs,* what emotion, what impressions!

But it seems to me that by far the jolliest of all the Gérôme stories (which are legion, by the way) is the one about his adventure with the *nouveau.* This excessively green young gentleman had been told that he must begin by tipping M. Gérôme, and that five francs was the customary amount. So, when the great man arrived and had finished criticizing the boy's drawings, our *nouveau* made a low, obsequious bow, and said *"Merci bien, cher maitre,"* and presented him with a French cartwheel. "Oh, thank you," said the artist, seeing through the

joke, "you have done what you could for your old master. Come, dine with me to-night!" And history adds that this was the beginning of an intimacy delightful to the teacher and invaluable to the pupil.

Sometimes you will hear that the students' gaiety is not what it was, but you will be wise not to trust that report too far. With his wife and a lady from New Haven, the writer happened to be passing Jullian's, one day, and remarked, "This is the art school you have read so much about, and we ought at least to step into the court." Accordingly, in we stepped just as a student was passing out. There were several others in the door-way. Seeing us pause to "rubber," one of them shouted to the boy who was on his way out, "Whoa! Hold on there, *mon vieux!* They're going to sing." The effect upon the lady from New Haven was superb. A madder lady from New Haven I have yet to see.

Merely to think of those effervescent French art-students, makes a man feel sulphitic and temperamental, himself, and fits him for rash deeds. Example: I am about to approach the subject of the Quat'z Arts ball and pass it by without a description. There's originality for you! There's impulsiveness—and incidentally

some degree of sense; for everybody who writes of the French art schools describes the Quat'z Arts ball, which, to tell the truth, is not a ball but a pageant. And considering that the nymphs and nude captives in the pageant are models—the same models who have posed in the ateliers all the year—it takes the viewpoint of a rather prudish outsider to give the occasion an air of any very exceptional depravity. For that matter, there have been spectacles in not a few Parisian music halls that permitted nearly as much license under circumstances by no means as extenuating, and there were plenty of Americans there—even young girls with their mothers.

Now, thanks to the ease with which practically anybody can undertake the study of art in France and thanks to the merry capers that enliven an art-student's existence, it is not unnatural that thousands on thousands of young Frenchmen should find themselves unable to resist its attractiveness. Especially as the path to wealth and glory seems so bright with limitless possibilities, for the young aspirant's welfare and advancement are looked after by the powers that be. In the first place, by the Salons.

How well I remember hearing, years and

years ago, that Susie Green, who used to live in our street, had had a picture "on the line at the Paris Salon." Vast was my amazement. *Vive Susie!* But I have since experienced more than one Salon and learned that the wonderful thing, really, was not Susie's audacity, but the Salon's matchless hospitality. As I learned, soon enough and to my grief as a Salon-goer, it is the ambition of a Salon to admit the work of as many Susies as can by any reasonable stretch of leniency be tolerated and housed. A Salon is not got up primarily for Salon-goers. It is got up primarily to encourage young artists—hosts and hosts of young artists—more young artists than you ever supposed there were in the whole world.

Nevertheless, it is a fine show, that Salon, if only for its setting. Gay banners all around the Grand Palais bid us enter, and in we pass through a sumptuous colonnade, to find ourselves in a wide, glass-roofed hall, with canvas hung beneath the glass and with evergreens and palms serving as a background for statuary down below—a singular impression. Something like a circus tent, something like a cemetery.

And now we observe that a second wide, glass-roofed hall crosses the first at right angles, so

that the immense structure is divided up into four enormous two-story buildings, with galleries along these inner thoroughfares. Innumerable vast rooms are simply jammed with paintings—some excellent, some mediocre, some (Susie Green's, I fear) a trifle short of mediocre and warranting that annual joke in the funny paper, "Prenez garde à la peinture!"

But not all the banners nor all the circus canvas, nor all the mortuary evergreens nor all the hospitality they dispense can make the Grand Palais anything like the stimulus to art that such an institution as the Petit Palais is. That relatively modest edifice, over the way, shelters pictures and sculptures purchased by the City of Paris. For we are in a country where cities become art patrons. Not content with acquiring marbles and bronzes by the score for parks and squares, they acquire paintings for municipal museums. And what the municipalities do on so splendid a scale, the national government does on a scale more splendid still. An under-secretary of state for Fine Arts has a portfolio in the cabinet, where he presides not only over the national art schools, the national museums, the national conservatory, the national opera (including the ballet) and the national theaters, but also over the conservation

of ancient edifices and their restoration. Incidentally, it is his function, once in a thousand years, to mislay a Mona Lisa. And of course it is his function to superintend the constant purchase of works of art for the national government—treasures that go first to the Luxembourg and thence either to the Louvre or to provincial galleries.

Meanwhile there are commissions for the embellishment of public buildings—such, for instance, as the Panthéon and the Hotel de Ville. Oh, the acres of ceiling, the dozens of acres of wall that lend themselves so remuneratively to the painter's brush! And the sculptor's chisel is even busier, if anything, for while many an interior affords its opportunities for plastic embellishment, the parks serve as out-door museums and become a means of bringing beauty home to the poor. For instance, the Buttes Chaumont. That lovely spot, so close to the haunts of anarchists and outlaws, overflows with exquisite sculptures.

All in all, then, considering that this artificial stimulus to art is provided in a land to which foreigners flock to make purchases and where the home market is sufficient to support an artist tribe of very impressive dimensions, what wonder that the tribe increases till art

takes its place among the leading French industries?

A detriment, this—in certain ways. It breeds by far too many artists. The profession is overcrowded, by reason of its accessibility and the jollity of the student life and the hospitality of the Salons, to say nothing of the hope that one's work will perhaps be ticketed "*Acquis par l'État*" and one's fortune made forthwith. And because the profession is so overcrowded, it comes about that a part of the French artists are always looking out for short cuts to notoriety—such, for instance, as Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Orphism, and what not. And, once more because of an overplus of artists, these humbugs find a public ready to reward them with at least a short-lived applause. It is a curious public—the sort that, with us, would confess, "We don't know anything about Art, but we know what we like." In France, this same type of mind becomes both gullible and dogmatic; for almost anybody in France can boast of two or three artists among his acquaintance, and therefore sets up as a *critique d'art*. Aware what a fraud he is, he easily allows himself to be run away with by any charlatan who proclaims a new art-theory. Next morning, he himself is trumpet-

ing that theory from the house-tops. Making converts, too! Or at any rate making momentary adherents, who stick by till a still newer prophet appears, with a still crazier gospel of art.

In France, such reaching out after the novel and untried is by no means surprising. Look back over the history of French art and you will see that its only permanent characteristic has been impermanence. Rebellion, innovation, and progress have been its proofs of eternal youth, and quite properly. But it is surprising beyond words to find the struggle for novelty so extensive as to maintain that horde of lunatics, cheats, degenerates, and "wild beasts" who call themselves *Indépendants.*

Outrageous fellows, who could not paint if they would and would not if they could, they conspire to fill some forty-odd portable picture-galleries (set all in a row, down by the Seine) with "horrors" you would never in your maddest mad moment conceive of—blasphemies against beauty, insults to the intelligence, and incredible affronts to decency. No doubt you remember the specimens imported for exhibition in America. Those were mild, most unrepresentatively mild, whereas the prevalent immoralities of a Salon des Indépendants are

the sort of thing we punish with State's prison sentences.

Paris flocks to the portable picture-galleries beside the Seine, and laughs—that is, all but the sillier, stupider Paris that falls down and worships. But is it not better, really, to worship the wrong thing than never to worship anything whatsoever? And is it not reasonable, or at least pardonable, to regard the follies and eccentricities and even the crimes of French art as a fairly inevitable by-product? Seriously, I believe such by-products must be expected, now and then, wherever art is so universally popularized.

And this universal popularization of art—what an astonishing phenomenon it is! Observe, for instance, how our charming young friends Estelle and Albertine have decorated their room. They are at the age when American girls tack pictures on walls and betray a partiality for the works of Christy, Gibson, and Harrison Fisher. Instead, these enthusiastic *jeunes filles* have gone in for reproductions of the most glorious masterpieces in the Louvre, the Luxembourg, and the Petit Palais. And when you visit those dazzling museums of art, you find them thronged with French people of all ages and all classes, who have come, not to

dose themselves with "culture," but simply because this is their idea of a good time. Moreover, a knowledge of art and artists is not thought despicable in France. It is not even thought unmasculine. The same sort of man who, in America, reads *The Saturday Evening Post* and prefers vaudeville, the type sometimes called "the man in the street" and at other times the "tired business man"—this sort of person will often delight you, in France, with his intelligence in matters æsthetic.

Indeed, an intelligence in matters æsthetic is regarded by the French as of genuinely practical value. There is money in it. Those resplendent jewelers' shops in the Rue de la Paix, those incomparable millinery and dressmaking establishments, those factories where the making of artificial flowers is carried to such a degree of artistic perfection that mere florists display the sign, "Fleurs Naturelles"—these and scores of other money-making interests owe their triumphs to artistic taste in both design and execution; and back of the shop or the factory, always, is that ever-effectual school of taste, the museum. No wonder the French Cabinet includes an under-secretary of state for fine arts. He is as essential as our Secretary of Commerce and Labor.

Then, too, the popularization of taste makes France the play-ground of Europe and Paris the tourist's heaven. Everything that tends to embellish French cities is money in the French pocket, as it brings just so many more tourists and induces them to remain just so much longer. So the French "tired business man" or "man in the street" has a deep-seated respect for beauty and a real reverence for artists. In France, whenever a new monument or a new public edifice or a new park is proposed, the papers begin an "inquest" (their word for "inquiry") among the artists. For days at a stretch they publish symposiums, each contribution signed by a celebrated painter or sculptor. And the consensus of such expert opinion prevails, since Frenchmen have somehow got it into their heads that artists may have better taste than even a committee of aldermen who "don't know anything about Art, but know what they like." In fact, France regards artists, not as long-haired weaklings, but as men whose lifelong professional experience has given them a faculty for authoritative judgment. France looks up to her artists, just as she looks up to her scientists and scholars.

Still again, there is the relation between art and life—a relation taken seriously in France.

I am not saying that a great deal more taste might not be applied advantageously, over there, in matters domestic and personal and even civic. I have never particularly admired the spindle-legged "elegance" of French furniture; or the powdered faces and carmined lips of the ordinary, highly respectable Frenchwoman; or the æsthetic "break" Paris was guilty of, some years ago, when, to welcome the Czar and Czarina, all the trees along the Champs-Élysées had paper flowers pinned to them in place of leaves! And yet it is a fine thing when a whole race becomes convinced that art—or at least the spirit of art—should naturally enter into the dealings of man with man.

This is the French idea, and it has produced that most charming of artistic attainments, French politeness.

## CHAPTER V

### *After You, My Dear Alphonse!*

IT is huge fun, in France, coming to a door at the same time with a Frenchman and seeing how long you can keep him there, "after you my dear alphonse-ing," with his shrugs and his high-shouldered bows and his impassioned gesticulations.

If *la politesse* is in reality an expression of the art-instinct, then, for once at least, you may take it that "art is long." Minutes pass, it seems, before your Frenchman surrenders—or even compromises, as Mrs. Malaprop did, with her stately "You go first, and I will precede you."

Personally, however, I suspect that it is less a form of art than a form of sport—i.e., an endurance-test. And yet there remains enough art in it and enough downright desperation to remind you how often you have heard the French called over-polite—which perhaps they

are, at least some of them, at least sometimes.

Strolling down the Rue Saint-Jacques one Sunday morning, I chanced to see a magnificent, svelte, exquisite, silk-hatted monsieur approach a blind beggar, and—by blue!—it was a suave monsieur and a generous. But why, as he dropped a coin into the blind man's cup, did Monsieur smile so captivatingly and lift his silk hat? *Quelle indiscretion!* Some day he will try that on a blind beggar who can really see, and who will resent the implication, and then—!

But it is in the shops—especially in the smaller shops—that *la politesse* appears to rage unchecked. Why must we be invariably saluted with a "*Bon jour, M'sieu' et 'Dame,*" and invariably escorted to the door by the proprietor in person and bidden an affectionate adieu? It becomes just a shade burdensome, now and then, to realize that to omit any one of the numerous palaverings and "kotowings" of *la politesse française* is to give serious offense.

Moreover, there are times when, so to speak, you have your hands full keeping your face straight. At the milliner's, for instance. For the milliner is not content with merely displaying extravagant and efflorescent sweet manners; she adds taffy. She says to your wife,

"Madame is always very beautiful, but in this creation Madame is ah! ravishing!" Indeed, I remember the milliner's assistant who, passing through the shop while a dear lady from Chicago was trying on a hat, said loudly to the dear lady from Chicago's small son, "You haf a vairy fine *maman.*" And I hear that a French dressmaker can outdo even that.

And when you arrive at a French hotel—good gracious, what ceremonies! Not only does the clerk leave his desk to welcome you with thrills; he and the manager escort you to your room. And sometimes the *cortége* includes also the porter, a chamber-maid, and a diminutive *valet-de-chambre.*

How I could go on, if I liked, recalling numberless comical instances of *la politesse française*—the conductor's despairing gesture when his tram had run us by; and the gendarme who tipped his hat obsequiously when throwing me out of a palace; and the more than courtly manners of my laundress in the Rue Vallette, and ever and ever so many other agreeable oddities—among them the experience of the dear lady from Chicago's small boy when she took him to call upon a six-year-old Frenchman. To lend gaiety to the occasion, she had provided

an orange. As previously instructed, Tommy presented the orange to Marcel. Whereupon —Marcel kissed Tommy on both cheeks.

But what shall I gain by bringing evidence to prove a thing every American already believes? There is over-politeness in France. Granted. The point that Americans need to have emphasized is not that. Instead, it is the point regarding French mannerlessness. For shocking bad manners exist in France and simply by telling a few scandals he has observed, one might make it appear that the French as a race were boorish, brutal, and very near to barbarism.

All over Europe, thanks to translations of "Martin Chuzzlewit," we Americans are known as the spitting nation. I have seen French cartoons taunting us with that. *Eh, bien!* are there not notices posted up in France to discourage an infinitely worse custom than spitting? And, even then, are the notices any too strictly obeyed?

Or, supposing Dickens's taunts were deserved in the America of to-day, might we not retort by asking some Frenchman to translate "Conspuez!"

For it does not seem to us that the cry of "Conspuez!" is particularly civilized. Indeed,

we are tempted to class it with kicking, which, in France, is a recognized mode of self-defense and an art taught by the instructors in boxing.

Naturally, one may spend many a long year in France without being either kicked or "conspued," but there are plenty of other annoyances. For my precious friend Lecoq is still there. When the *galerie* at our *pension* is filled with readers and letter-writers and literary persons busy scribbling, then it is that Lecoq seats himself at the piano and plays "Au Claire de la Lune" with one finger, in the wrong key.

Perhaps there are American youngsters as inconsiderate, but things occasionally happen in France that could hardly happen over here. The day of the French army's Spring maneuvers at Vincennes, I crossed Paris by the subway they call the Métro (short for Métropolitain). A violent crowd packed every train. Ventilation there was none. At each station, matters grew worse. Presently a young woman began to faint. Some one pulled down a window an inch or so, and the girl was lifted up to the aperture to breathe. Thereupon a young Frenchman called out hilariously, "How it is droll! She goes to make a discourse!" And everybody laughed.

This in France—the France where women are so tenderly adored!

Well, perhaps women are adored in France. As a matter of fact they are. But you seem to miss something. Frenchmen flatter women and court them and pamper them and kiss their hands, and yet you wonder if they respect them. It was a young hoodlum who jeered the fainting girl in the Métro, and the crowd who laughed were of the lower class; say, if you like, that they misrepresented the Frenchman's attitude toward women. Then, for sake of justice, ask yourself if members of the perfectly representative *bourgeoisie* are invariably above tormenting women and particularly young girls. When, some afternoon, a modest little *jeune fille* reports that she has been followed half a kilometre by a man who kept calling her pet names and offering to send her presents, it turns out that the stranger, far from being a ruffian of the *Apache* type, was an "elegant" monsieur who wore that incontestable badge of respectability, the *chapeau* "high of form with eight reflections."

Oh, yes, similar annoyances are met with by American girls in American cities and in broad daylight, too! I admit it. There is a difference, though. American girls who have that

experience invite it, consciously or unconsciously, for they are many shades less demure than the *jeune fille.* And besides, the men who pester women in American cities are of a class far lower than their *confrères* in France.

Of course, every Frenchman recognizes the atrocious incivility involved in such adventures and condemns them heartily. They are quite exceptional pranks the ordinary man never indulges in. But I am unable to add, much though I should like to, that good manners, in France, involve an adequate expression of respect for women. Never shall I forget my astonishment on learning that French etiquette forbids a woman to bow to a man until he has first bowed to her!

And I wish I could put the usual interpretation upon the habit too many Frenchmen have of telling *risqué* stories and jokes in the presence of women. You will hear it said that such freedom indicates an absence of narrowness or prudery on the women's part. Whereas what it really indicates is a deliberate intention, on the men's part, to plague the women.

Just here one may be over-severe, standards differ so, and perhaps one may be over-severe in frowning upon the rule that forbids the

woman to bow first. On this latter point, however, it seems to me that French etiquette has got things pretty radically inverted, and there are various other instances of that same calamity. When you move into a new street, it is you yourself, not the neighbors, who must call first. And when a vacancy occurs among the Forty Immortals of the Académie Française, and you feel like hopping up and laying claim to immortality, it is good manners to do precisely that. You "pose your candidacy." Then you go from Academician to Academician begging him to vote for you. Custom requires it.

But—dear me!—I am by no means at a loss for material with which to refute the notion that the French are always over-polite. If such were my embarrassment, I should point to the *gamin* and the *cocher*. It is all very amusing, no doubt, to have little French urchins cry out "Oh, yes!" or "Miss!" or "Angleesh!" as you pass them in the street, or even to have them criticize your taste in hats. But no one will say that this phenomenon indicates over-politeness. Perhaps it is as well that the *gamin* is a fast-disappearing type, if not practically extinct already. How diligently I

searched for him, this last time! How patiently I winked at tiny lads, grinned at them, wiggled my nose at them! Not one single solitary *gamin* to be found among all those thousands!

As for the *cocher,* he is no longer the dire and devilish brute he was. In the days of his glory, he would drive at a walk, tempt you to cross the street a block ahead of him, and then, just as you left the curb, lash his poor, doddering spook of a horse, and come charging at you like chain lightning—which was the more awful because you had heard that, if he succeeded in running you down, he would be given half the money when you were arrested and fined for obstructing the highway.

Happily, our sky is no longer filled with hoofs, over there, and we have ceased to call the bronze group on the Grand Palais "the Spirit of Paris" by reason of its rampant steeds.

Alas, how torpid and listless the *cocher* has become. I imagine it is because he sees his best efforts so discouragingly outdone by the headlong automobiles and the enormous motor-busses that go hurtling through the streets like flying mad-houses on wheels. "Name of a

name!" cries the once-terrible *cocher,* "Oh, what's the use!"

So, in certain ways at least, *la politesse* is improving, loudly though fine gentlemen of the old school lament what they call its decay. And possibly the time impends when the charge of over-politeness will seem deserved by Frenchmen one and all. At present, I think a comparison between their manners and ours, taking everything into consideration, leads to this: Although Frenchmen are not more polite, on the whole, than Americans, it is true that more Frenchmen are polite. When you settle down to live in France, what surprises you is the marvelous diffusion of good manners, not the occasional exaggerations of good manners.

For sake of emphasis—emphasis on truth, I mean—let us take an extreme case of this distinctively French achievement, the diffusion of good manners. Let us rise at four, some morning and visit *les Halles Centrales,* as they call their great municipal markets in Paris. At that hour, the place is one struggling, wriggling mass of rough men and rougher women loaded down with bags and bales and baskets, with whole muttons and quartered beeves, and with every enormous load that backs or shoulders

or heads can carry. Imagine such a scene in America and the talk that would accompany it! Harsh and curt, if not profane, that talk would be. Yet listen! What is it these French people are saying? "Take guard, mademoiselle!" "Make attention, madame, if it you please." "Thank you well, monsieur!"

I have heard of the American woman who said the most wonderful thing she encountered abroad was "the French pheasants singing the 'Mayonnaise.'" But I beg to differ. The most wonderful thing abroad is not the French pheasants singing the "Mayonnaise," it is the French market drudges keeping their tempers and smiling and remembering to be polite to one another even when driven distracted by terrific overwork and confusion.

I have called this an extreme case, illustrating with perhaps a needless emphasis that "distinctively French achievement, the diffusion of good manners." I hold to my contention. If I could show a stranger only a single "glory of the France" and let it go at that, I should take him to *les Halles Centrales* at four in the morning.

But in a land where such splendid courtesy is possible among the roughest of the workers, you will come to expect politeness from ser-

vants, from waiters, from railway guards and porter, and from practically every one with whom you come in contact—yes, even from the "demoiselle of the magazine," that being French for a shop-girl; and it is this uniform civility, more than anything else, that makes travel and residence in France so delightful.

Especially as concerns your relations with your servants. In America it is necessary to ostracize one's servants, or encourage insolence; in England, servants require more than ostracism, they require abuse—unless you abuse them, they think you a low fellow like themselves and consider it a degradation to serve you; in France, the servants are so courteous and so appreciative of courtesy, that if you make pets of them, as you are strongly enough tempted to do, the result is better service and a genuinely devoted loyalty. A cheerful tone on your part, an unfailing "Please" or "Thank you," an occasional inquiry for the little folks and a few trifling remembrances on New Year's Day and the "anniversaries of their nascences," and lo! you find yourself idolized. How vividly I recall the awful morning when Pierre and Marguerite were compelled to leave our *pension* in the *Quartier Latin*—Marguerite shaking with sobs,

Pierre laying a huge, tremulous hand on my shoulder and telling me he loved me.

There could be no doubting their sincerity. The outburst came an hour or two after the last tip had been bestowed. Moreover, a hundred thoughtful kindnesses had already attested the affection it expressed. And as for the light it shed upon French character—why, who could misunderstand? They are kind, the French—sweetly, patiently, delightfully kind. Very possibly their manners spring somewhat from the promptings of the artistic sense. Perhaps what seems to us spontaneous is now and then mere custom and habit. And it may even be that one Frenchman in a thousand is polite because it pays. But I have experienced so much real friendliness in France that I hesitate to attribute these people's charming geniality to other than simple-hearted motives.

It is this simple-heartedness, chiefly, that makes travel in their country such a treat to us Americans; and oh, the stories we could tell! For instance, what happened at Carcassonne. So pretty it was and so characteristically French that I must tell it now.

You know Carcassonne—the ancient, walled city the Visigoths built? We knew it by Nadaud's poem—the one that begins:

Je me fais vieux, j'ai soixante ans.
J'ai travaillé toute ma vie
Sans avoir durant tout ce temps
Pu satisfaire mon envie.
Je vois bien qu'il n'est ici-bas
De bonheur complet pour personne;
Mon voeu ne s'accomplira pas;
Je n'ai jamais vu Carcassonne.

We had thought the story in the poem very touching—an old peasant living all his life so near to Carcassonne and wanting so dearly to visit it and being somehow prevented every time till at last the singer of the song says, "But you *shall* go to Carcassonne. You shall go with me, and have your heart's desire. To-morrow we will start."

That night the old man died, and the poem ends with the pathetic line,

"Each mortal has his Carcassonne."

As for ourselves, we traveled very nearly all the way across the south of France to visit Carcassonne, and oh, but it paid, it paid! There, on a noble hill, loomed the towered *cité*, with its double chain of ramparts—walls the Black Prince looked upon and feared to attack. To-day, thanks to restorations begun by Viollet le Duc, they look precisely as they did

in the Middle Ages. You can see an unrestored medieval stronghold at Aigues-Mortes, from which, in the old, old days, St. Louis set sail for the Holy Land; perhaps you will admire the roofless towers even more than those at Carcassonne; but I think there is sentiment enough left, despite restorations, to make the walled city of the Aude adorably attractive. And besides, there is the *gardien.*

It was natural, of course, for the writer to ask him if he knew the poem, and it was equally natural for the *gardien* to ask if the writer knew "the *chanson*"—melody by Nadaud as well as words.

This was a surprise. Turning to the writer's wife, he said, "Does Madame know music?" and presently she was seated at the piano indoors, playing the accompaniment while the *gardien* sang and the *gardienne* smiled her welcome.

We were so charmed with the song that we begged leave to buy it, but unfortunately the *gardien* had no duplicate copy and could not obtain one without going to the modern city of Carcassonne, a mile and more away. He said we could easily find a copy of the song there, ourselves.

So we dropped the matter and talked of other

things—of the towers and the donjon and the magnificent stained glass in the ancient church—all with unfeigned enthusiasm. And we told how for years we had looked forward to visiting Carcassonne and what a wide detour we had made in order to accomplish our purpose and how infinitely more than satisfied we were with our reward.

"Ah!" said the *gardien's* wife. "You *have* seen Carcassonne," and, as we were leaving, she pressed the sheet of music upon us, refusing to be paid for it and exclaiming, "*Avec plaisir! avec plaisir!*"

We have it still, that *chanson,* and I never sing it without seeing once more the kindness in the *gardien's* eyes and hearing his wife say, so joyously, "*Avec plaisir! avec plaisir!* For you *have* seen Carcassonne!"

They are dear, good, lovely people at Carcassonne, and not at Carcassonne only. In the North—in Paris, for instance—Frenchmen have told me that the charming episode was distinctively Southern in its spirit. Well, perhaps, perhaps. I have my doubts, though. For it was in the North that I suffered the deepest sorrows of my life, and nothing could have surpassed the sympathy, the gentleness, and the devoted, self-sacrificing kindness of

French people I had known but a few months.

Perhaps it seems a bit illogical, my calling up these obviously exceptional instances of the good-will that I believe underlies the civilities of the French. One might say that an enforced parting or a chance sentiment or the strong appeal made by suffering would elicit expressions of friendliness from almost anybody almost anywhere. So let me point to what will generally pass for more convincing evidence—i.e., to the patient, considerate, sympathetic delicacy with which French people refrain from laughing (or from swearing) when we attempt to speak their language and to the diligence with which they set about discovering what under the sun it is we mean.

A pretty severe test of politeness, I thought, was the "break" achieved by an American woman who had set up housekeeping in Lyon. Finding herself in need of salt pork, one morning, and not knowing the French for it, she looked in the Dictionary. There she found *salé* (salted) but failed to observe the accent. Then, hunting out the French word for pork, she came upon *porc*—which seemed too easy to be right, so she took the next word, *cochon.*

Imagine, then, the pork-butcher's astonishment when she entered his shop, looked him

fiercely in the eye, and, with the loud-voiced severity common to Americans trying to make themselves understood in a foreign language, said, "Sale cochon!"

Now, as the meaning of "Sale cochon!" is "You dirty pig!" it has always seemed to me a triumph of *la politesse* that the Frenchman should have managed to swallow his amusement and, without even asking a question, have given the lady salt pork.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Parlez-Vous?*

SUCH grit as it has taken—to hold in, all this while, about the fearful and wonderful French language!

In that chapter on the French physique—their bodily selves—one was tempted to remark upon the most active member of the French body, namely the tongue; and in considering the French temperament and its much vaunted gaiety, it was difficult to avoid mentioning the language, which is in some sort an expression of that temperament. Then, too, there were chapters on the French mind and on French taste and on French manners—subjects close akin to that of *la langue française,* which quite ingenuously reflects the cleverness, the artistic sense, and the civility of the strong and serious French race.

Well, murder will out, and so will French, and, thanks to that story of the American

woman and her "*sale cochon,*" the topic has already bobbed up with sufficient vehemence. Accordingly, let me ask you, "*Ah! mon cher ami, est-ce que vous parlez français?*" I do not ask if you *read* French. I ask if what you speak, on pretext of speaking French, really is. In a word, my friend, *parlez-vous?*

It is indeed a terrifying question. Some Americans—friends of mine who live in the "Rooay Saynt-Jacks," but are soon to remove to the most fashionable section of the "Camp-Eliza"—are loud in their praise of Fremiet's monument to "Jeanie D. Arc"; and I may add that their French is no worse than what one often encounters among Americans in Paris.

We blunder, all of us. It is inevitable, in speaking a foreign language, but sometimes a positively insignificant change of sound makes a difference simply amazing. For instance, when the lady from Denver had mislaid her gloves, and said to her French chambermaid, "Pouvez-vous retrouvez mes dents?" Or take that other charming case—the one involving the delightful young person from Milwaukee who, when formally introduced, said, reverentially, "Je suis très charmante de faire votre connaissance."

Yet it is not to mere blundering that I would

call attention just now. Instead, I am gunning for our common American inability to pronounce the simplest French words in anything resembling the French manner. We cannot say *rue* (the word for *street*); what we say is *roue* (the word for *wheel*). We are taught to drop the final *e* in *verte,* whereas the French never drop it; then, discovering our mistake, we go to the opposite extreme, and say *verta.* And we drawl our syllables—"singing," as the French call it; unaware that we are doing so, we pronounce bébé "ba-a-ay-ba-a-ay."

To a great extent, these are mechanical faults, due to a defective placing of our tongues and lips when speaking; but what ailed our ridiculous professors of college French, who should have taught us better at the outset? Why were not our tongues and lips trained by the method you will sometimes see employed in English schools—a hand-glass for each pupil to watch his mouth by while making it go through the contortions charted out on the diagram set before him? And why did none of our professors know the trick our good friend the Abbé Sarthe relies upon so successfully—taking hold of a pupil's lips (when prayer fails) and putting them into the positions essential to the pronunciation of French words?

Next to a complete transfusion of blood (so that you become a Frenchman, yourself) or next to the happy circumstance of being born in France and learning French while teething, I know nothing at all comparable with this mechanical system. It puts the lips right, the tongue right (and sometimes the nose right, also) and the sounds that come out are pure French.

Now, I am aware that there is another thing wrong with us besides our failure to pose our vocal organs in the attitudes required for the pronunciation of French. We lack ear. The cheery, chirpy French accent—by "accent" I mean the tune of the sentence—is music too subtle for our grasp. Worse yet, we allow our ears to be deceived by our eyes. When we *see* that a French word is spelled like an English word, we seem to *hear* it pronounced like the English word. Americans say "Pallay Royal" instead of "Pallay Rwah-yahl" and "Oppra" instead of "Oh-pehr*ah,*" and then wonder why Frenchmen find them at times a little difficult to understand. Indeed, they become exceedingly indignant with the Frenchman, and say things not flattering to the French intellect.

What would they say, I wonder, if foreigners took similar liberties with English, pronouncing

it, syllable for syllable, in the foreign manner? There was an Italian, once, who tried that plan in London, and inquired his way to a street he pronounced "Keh-ap-si-deh." As you recall, it was the ninth policeman, only, who made him write down "Keh-ap-si-deh," which, when spelled in English, turned out to be "Cheapside."

But I fear that not even this horrible example will reform our American mispronouncers of French, and I am glad that I possess a still more terrible warning to shock them with. Go on mispronouncing, my dear compatriots, but pray notice that it is costing you money. In the eyes of Frenchmen, it marks you as a newly-arrived greenhorn, and you will be systematically fleeced by cabbies, shopkeepers, and especially by *garçons-de-café* in those dreadful, dreadful restaurants where no prices are printed on the bill-of-fare and where, as Mr. Berkeley Smith so tragically remarks, "the waiter looks you over, and charges you whatever he thinks you can't afford."

Observe, please. I am not arguing for a flawless Parisian accent. You can't acquire that if you try. What I do argue for is a pronunciation able to pass as that of an American who landed in France some months or years ago and

has at least a nodding acquaintance with French ways.

Happily, almost any one can pick up this serviceable pidgin French, merely by listening and imitating, though it takes incredible patience. At first, no matter how diligently you studied French in college, you will not understand one word of the chatter all around you. Then will come the stage when you catch a word or phrase, now and then, only to have it hopelessly obscured by the next word or phrase. After a time, you get whole sentences, occasionally, but there is still a perceptible interval between hearing and understanding, and during the interval a whole new sentence has been spoken.

But speaking — "parleyvooing" — actually using the French you have picked up—ah, that is another story, quite! For you are inevitably tempted to think in English while speaking in French, and the process lays traps for you constantly. Yes, even as regards vocabulary. Hosts of French words that closely resemble English words in look and sound have a totally different meaning. In the French theater, a *repetition* is not a repetition, it is a rehearsal; the *scéne* is not a scene, it is the stage; the *assistants* are not assistants, they are spectators.

Oh, lovely language! A *médicin* is not a medicine but a doctor, a *physicien* is not a physician but a physicist, an *éditeur* is not an editor but a publisher, *stores* are not stores but awnings, your *figure* is not your figure but your face, and *correspondance* in the subway is a transfer, and an *occasion* is a bargain, and they call a restless child "dissipated" and a shy child "savage"—*sauvage,* meaning "wild," in the sense that a bird is wild and therefore shy.

Sometimes the simplest-meaning French becomes the least understandable—as in the proclamation posted on the walls of Paris: "For Sale, Twenty-Five Reformed Horses."

At a guess, I said, "Why, anybody ought to see what that means—young horses, broken to harness!" But I learned on inquiry that the *vingt-cinq chevaux reformés* were twenty-five condemned army horses—reformed in the sense of being made over from the military to the civil estate.

But while the simplest-meaning French may mislead outrageously, it may now and then produce a complete bewilderment in the novice at translation. One day, when "all Paris" was flocking to Vincennes by the hundreds of thousands, the subway entrances bore notices bidding passengers stand in line (*faire queue*) for

tickets. This was what I read: "Because of the grand affluence, Messieurs the Voyagers are prayed to make tail."

You see, then, how perfectly hopeless it is to think in English and speak in French. You come a cropper every time. You say, "More coal," whereas French says, "Again of the coal"; you say, "There is," whereas French says, "It has there"; you say, "What is it?" whereas French says, "What is that ~~which~~ it is ~~that~~ that is?" Or you remark, confidently, "I believe so," only to learn that the French form is "I believe that yes."

And yet, despite all these perversities and rascalities of idiom, it is miraculous how well you get on. You go into a shoe-store, and lo! some paragon of ingenuity finds out that you want shoes—yes, even despite your French. And when you rise from your seat in a subway car and tip your hat to a lady and say, "Madame, give yourself the pain to sit yourself," she will understand every syllable.

I have observed, however, that one fares even better when using the phrases the French themselves do, though they are singular enough phrases, heaven knows. When Monsieur inquires his way to the Place des Vosges, does he say, "Where is the Place des Vosges?" or even

"Where finds itself the Place des Vosges?" Instead, he says, ingratiatingly, "For to go Place des Vosges?" and I advise you to adopt his happy formula.

But while it is a handicap to think in English while speaking in French, I imagine that you will find it difficult to think at all. There lies my own difficulty, I am free to confess. If I cannot converse in French, it is because, the moment I begin speaking that dreadful language, every semblance of an idea deserts me. I am overwhelmed with stage-fright—*le trac,* as the French say. It becomes impossible to look my Frenchman in the eye. I fidget, stammer, and wish I was dead.

So far as I know, there is only one remedy for *le trac.* Champagne! Oh, that marvelous Thanksgiving dinner at our *pension* in the *Quartier Latin!* As a tongue-loosener, shame-killer, and unchainer of imprisoned French, there is nothing to compare with the Parisian substitute for sweet cider. After dinner, I actually caught myself making a speech in French—or was that a delusion of grandeur?

Considering the colossal difficulty we Americans have with French, it is humiliating to observe how even the littlest French children can speak and understand it. Never shall I for-

get the five-year-old in front of the pelican's cage at the Jardin des Plantes and the five-year-old's impassioned warning to the three-year-old: "Do not approach thyself not!" Instantly, the tiny creature drew back from the pelican; and, being a new-comer at the time, I was struck with unforgetable wonder.

Then, too, there are dogs, even, that put us to the blush. "Assis!" cries his mistress, and immediately Monsieur le Chien sits up and begs, waving his front paws violently up and down. "Donne ta patte!" says she, and, sure enough, out goes the little sinner's paw to shake hands. "L'autre patte!" Out goes his other paw. Shocking!—that is when you reflect that not one American college-graduate in a thousand could understand as readily.

However, we have our revenge. Dogs, children, and the whole jolly tribe of us can understand English, and that is what almost inevitably floors a Frenchman. *Pauvre diable,* he is without exception the worst linguist to be found anywhere on the earth's surface.

In an indulgent mood, I sometimes make excuses for him by recalling that, as all other nations consent to learn his language, he has no particularly strong incentive to learn theirs. And I maintain that, theoretically at least, there

is something in this. For instance, consider our charming young Swedish baroness (the Baroness Zuzu, we called her in fun) who spoke faultless French, good German, fair Italian, and excellent English; and said she "simply had to, since nobody bothered to study Swedish, and unless she learned other languages, she would be in Sweden and unable to get out."

It is the same way with the Dutch. The best English I ever heard from a foreigner was spoken by a Dutchman, though I must add that even he could not converse in English when a piano was going. And it is the same way with the Russians. They learn French as a matter of course and now and then make attempts upon English. It was a Russian at our *pension* who said to me one evening, "Vous chantez les chansons américains hip hip all right."

But, while the entire human race comes to France armed with at least a comical substitute for pidgin French, and while a Frenchman speaking nothing but French can go practically anywhere and drum up somebody or other to understand him, and while these circumstances combine to absolve a Frenchman of the necessity of learning "tongues living" (French for "modern languages"), the fact remains that the French genius is radically and all but in-

curably unsuited to the mastery of English. When you hear a Frenchman speaking creditable English, you are in the presence of a hero. Either that, or your Frenchman was taught English in his infancy.

How comes it, then, that France is so extensively adorned with signs proclaiming "English spoken," "Here One Speaks English," and even "English Spoken, American Understood"? Nothing could be simpler, really, than this seemingly baffling question. English *is* spoken—if you yourself speak it!

And sometimes it is spoken by the French. My barber in the Rue Soufflot speaks it beautifully (and charges double for it) and you marvel at his accomplishment till you happen to ask, for instance, where the nearest drugstore is or how often the Montrouge steam double-deckers go past in the Boule' Miche'. Then it turns out that Monsieur le Coiffeur knows only the English of hair-cutting and shaving and the luxury Frenchmen term *un schampooing*. Mention any other subject, and you have gone entirely outside his vocabulary.

But you are not to infer that, when Frenchmen have acquired a fine ignorance of English, they hide their light under a bushel. Not they! They brandish it aloft. They talk of *un shack-*

*'ands,* of "eezh-leef" (high life), of *groog américain,* and of the great English poet and dramatist, Shack-ess-pay-*ar*. Yonder in the Boule' Miche' you notice that a giddy haberdasher has named his establishment "Style House." And not content with such linguistic mongrels as *bostoner* (to dance the Boston), *rinker* (to skate), *bifteck* (beefsteak), and *redingote* (riding coat), the French have appropriated the word bull-dog (spelled in French *bouledogue*) and I well remember the heart-breaking poster: "Lost, un chien bouledogue."

No doubt we Anglo-Saxons have made sorry enough wreckage of our imported French, and yet we try to spell it as correctly as we can, and I think Frenchmen manage best when they attempt to do as much for English. Example: "Machez-vous le chewing-gum?" A refreshing contrast, this, to what usually occurs, especially as regards the French treatment of English and American proper names. I confess that it took me several minutes to recognize our honored friend "le Dr. Woodssspitchinson."

Occasionally the French mania for showing off the talent they do not possess leads to still more amusing linguistic comedies—for instance, that case of the pseudo-English verb, *flirter*. Originally *conter fleurettes* (to "tell little

flowers," meaning "whisper sweet nothings"), the expression was kidnaped by the English, who, with their usual skill, corrupted it into "flirt." And now it reappears in France, as an importation from across the Channel, in the form of *flirter*.

Well, so be it, so be it! Despite all the frightful mangling of English words and all the ridiculous assumption of an accomplishment still unacquired, I find plenty of Frenchmen who can converse with me, somehow or other, in my own language, and plenty more who can understand my English while I understand their French. And if the English of Paris is now and then a trifle amusing, why, so much the better.

As for the mispronunciation, what a charming flavor it adds—in singing, let us say, that tender love-passage,

> "I sent zee late a wozy weace,
> Not so much hon'ring zee
> As giving it a 'ope zat zair
> It could not wizard be!"

Moreover, one takes a certain satisfaction in observing that, if we Anglo-Saxons fail to cope with French pronunciation, there are sounds in English that it very nearly kills a Frenchman to pronounce—*th*, for one. When a Frenchman

takes his life in his hand and tackles *th,* he runs out his tongue so that you can hang your hat on it. And, *sapristi!* name of a name! what a lark it is to watch him say our *h!* For he tells you that the French *h* is an all but inaudible cluck, down in his throat—a cluck whose occurrence is indicated mainly by the omission of a liaison—so that "les Halles" is pronounced, not "lays Ahl," but "lay Ahl."

Any Frenchman, I think, will assent to these remarks of mine, but I think no Frenchman will drop the matter there. For the French ear resents our habit of using a *w* to denote the French *r*. *Ah, vous avez raison, vous autres Français!* Yet what other of our consonants comes nearer the sound? And by what conceivable or inconceivable contortions of the vocal organs is an Anglo-Saxon to produce that sound? I give it up, though I have heard that one has only to get used to trilling the Scotch *r* on the tip of one's tongue and then—oh, so easily!—flap the other end.

But it is in its glorious diction, even more than in its pronunciation, that the English of Paris becomes a joy forever. Quite unconsciously, it affords style—as when a delightful young Frenchman remarked, solemnly, "I—know—one—who—dwells—in—New York," or

when another, equally gifted, described the home-life of the French by remarking, "The husband screams very much. The wife does all."

Obviously, these were the natural enough consequences of learning English out of books, but here and there you will meet a Frenchman who has picked up his English from Americans, and in that case you are in for surprises. Talking with a brilliant, polished, cultured young barrister, one evening, I happened to express my interest in the care with which Frenchwomen bring up their daughters.

To this my brilliant, polished, cultured young barrister replied, suavely, "Rats!"

## CHAPTER VII

### *French Morals*

AS I was saying, there are Americans who could not learn French if they would, and others who would not if they could, and it must be admitted that much is gained in either case, for then the sojourner in France escapes a great deal that is vulgar, not to say downright indecent and immoral. For they are always joking in France, and by far too many of them have always the same joke.

I talked this over, one evening at the Vachette, with the clever young French barrister mentioned in the last chapter. I said, "In America, we think it wicked to joke about sex."

Nothing could have astonished him more. "*Ciel!*" he cried. "Why, in France, that is our one chief joke!"

Settled! What could I answer? That perhaps its being the custom in France was a poor

enough voucher for its being a worthy custom? I knew my man too well. Like other Frenchmen, he admired *l'esprit gaulois*—Gallic wit, as we should call it—and held it in reverence as a legacy from the good old times. As we look back to the good old times of our Pre-Revolutionary ancestors, so Frenchmen look back to the good old times of Rabelais and his *esprit gaulois*. To Frenchmen, Gallic wit has become a kind of sacred institution. Even a charming, cultivated, delightful fellow like this barrister of mine will say of it, "It is masculine fun. Men relish it, women don't.—*Voilà!*"

Well, *voilà!* Having got into a discussion of Franco-American contrasts in opinions regarding morals, I thought it might pay to draw out my man a little further, so I said, "There are other things that shock us besides your jokes. There are your shows—I mean your music-hall shows, where the performers wear scarcely enough to be termed costumes at all. In America, this sort of thing would be stopped by the police."

A look of petulant disgust came over my Frenchman's face. "*Mon Dieu!*" said he indignantly. "What does it matter? What difference does it make what you *see* and *hear?* It can't affect *you?* *You* are the same?"

Really! Of course, I could have contested the point, just as anybody could, and of course I could have developed what would have appeared to me an irresistibly convincing line of argument. Not to him, however. I was perfectly well aware that it would be breath wasted.

Accordingly, I merely answered, "Americans are pretty stubborn in their belief that what a man sees and hears has its effect on the man, and that it may lead to evil conduct. For instance, to that sort of thing—" and I nodded toward a group of students, one of whom had a girl with him. From time to time he would kiss the girl, to keep her quiet and prevent her grumbling at being left out of the card-game he and his friends were playing.

"Pray tell me, monsieur," said I to my companion, "what do you honestly think of that sort of thing, yourself?"

Actually, he defended it. He described it as a kind of short-term marriage without benefit of clergy. He said it had a refining influence, that it developed a man's higher nature. He spoke of it almost as an American sentimentalist might speak of the semi-romantic acquaintance our bachelors have with our girls. He said, "We can find exquisite little creatures, who care for books and music and pictures and good

plays. Our life with them is an inspiration, calling out the very best there is in us. It is no exaggeration when we speak of them as our 'little friends.' "

"And what becomes of your little friend when you cast her off?" I asked, for I thought of Fantine in *Les Miserables* and of the poor "little friends" you may see, any morning, at the *Morgue.*

"Oh!" he answered, readily enough. "She can marry."

"Marry!" I exclaimed. "For God's sake, whom? An *Apache?*"

"No, a workman," said he.

I saw I should gain nothing by telling what I thought of that, so I let it pass and went back to my Frenchman's assertion that the short-term marriage was "an inspiration." I said, "But why must a man degrade a girl for the good of his soul? Why can't he derive sufficient inspiration from her friendship?"

I shall never forget the blank amazement in his eyes when I said this. He could scarcely believe his senses. He hesitated, then replied, "You know better than to ask a question like that!"

We had come to an *impasse,* obviously, and yet I thought it worth while to discover what my

friend would say of the fellow who sat opposite with the girl. "My impression," said I, "is that he is rather like the sort of man who tugs a blooded dog about with him and has the air of saying, 'See this fine animal of mine? Who *wouldn't* be proud?' "

"Yes, that's his attitude precisely," said my friend. "He's showing the girl off."

"He wouldn't do that in America," said I.

"Nor in a French provincial city," he answered.

It was outrageous, of course—all this calm, cynical, and even at times idealistic comment by a young gentleman of my French barrister's stamp. He was a nice boy, an exceedingly nice boy; in America he would have held absolutely different opinions; in America, he would have been what Parisians call *un saint.* Yet here he sat, confidently informing me that a man derived "inspiration" from a short-term alliance with a girl he led about like a pet dog. I could have retorted, "You are dirty, and you are cruel," but what good would that have done? The dirty are not conscious of their dirt, or the cruel of their cruelty. And who knows but that he would have got back at me by citing the numerous American writers who have professed to

discover an idyllic charm in precisely this dirt and this cruelty?

But who and what, meanwhile, was the girl? Where had she come from? What amazing circumstances had caused her to be led about like a blooded dog? Was hers a not unnatural rebellion against the restraints put upon a *jeune fille?* Or was she somehow caught and victimized by that "*Babylone moderne,*" whose chief ambition, one almost thinks, is the destruction of young women?

I have asked my friend the Abbé about this, and he says the worst enemy of good morals in France is the custom that requires all the servants of an apartment house to lodge in the mansard. Nobody watches them. Nobody takes account of their comings and goings. Nobody cares. If a girl finds her room in the mansard intolerably dreary and the café down below irresistibly attractive, then out she goes at midnight into dangers that will make her an "inspiration" to some such moralist as my young barrister.

It is moralists of his type that have given the world in general the impression that nobody in France has a conscience, and unfortunately there are incidents, now and then, that point to

very much that conclusion. More than once has an indecent joke appeared in the paper ostentatiously devoted to church interests and the cause of the old *noblesse.* Several years ago, vendors along the Boulevards were selling photographs of nude girls carrying crosiers and crosses and rosaries, while the perfectly solemn caption underneath asked, "What is so beautiful as the religion of a pure and lovely woman?" And, somewhat more recently, when a judge passed sentence upon the actresses arrested for appearing on the stage unclad, he said, "Mesdemoiselles, you have done the morals of your country an absolutely irreparable injury," and fined them five dollars.

Thus lightly, it seemed, did he value the morals of his country, nor was his attitude entirely exceptional. In France, there exists a great, great tolerance. It springs partly from indifference, partly from a hatred of meddling, and partly from the deep-seated national determination to avoid hypocrisy. Nothing more disgusts a Frenchman than the prudery that shows off by tinkering other people's morals and at the same time permits itself indulgences in private wrong-doing. When an Englishman professes himself horrified by the scandals of certain Paris music-halls and *cafés chantants,* the

Frenchman reminds him of London's midnight streets, which (truth to tell) are a thousand times wickeder than those of Paris.

Sometimes this revulsion against hypocrisy leads Frenchmen to pose as scamps and terrors, when in reality they are no such thing, and almost always it leads them to show a serene exterior if you imply that they have awful sins on their conscience. There was President Fallières's case, for instance. During his electoral campaign, a journalist visited M. Fallières's native village in the Midi and picked up a whopper about another man's wife and an escape by a second-story window leaving the marks of Fallières's boot-heels on the wall. After the election, this same journalist (who, by the way, had signed his article) went to interview the new president. He was blandly received, and not till their talk had nearly ended did M. Fallières refer to the damages his reputation had received, and only in whimsical terms even then. "Too bad! too bad!" said he. "But really, you know, they were stuffing you, down there in the Midi. The thing never happened. I am sorry, for it is a great loss to legend."

What more distinctively, more characteristically French? Even a President, though forced

to silence a scandal, could not resist the temptation to take a fling at prudery all the same.

It is precisely this spirit, I think, that impels Frenchmen to regale foreigners with outrageous stories about the lightness with which the marriage tie is regarded in France and even to argue in defense of laxity, declaring that every human being has a right to a "grand passion." If French marriages are arranged by the old folks, and if the bride cannot look to find a lover in her husband, then why must she go through life unloved—especially when the mate to whom she is bound very likely turns out to be a rascal, not only untrue to his vows but in haste to lay hands on her dowry and spend it? Such is the usual explanation one hears for a state of things no Frenchman appears particularly anxious to discount.

Whereas, what are the facts? Were they anywhere near sufficient to justify the common opinion one hears expressed, we should expect a perfect raging torrent of divorces. Instead, divorce is quite the rarest phenomenon in France. Or, on the other hand, we should expect a somewhat lenient attitude toward the deceived husband. Instead, he is regarded with the deepest contempt. And finally, we should expect the very frequency of domestic tragedy

would prevent its serving as a theme for fiction and the drama. On the contrary, it is practically the only theme available for fiction and the drama in France.

It is not a pretty theme. Granted. But we must remember that the English and American plays and novels in which the interest turns on the ruin of a young girl are simply intolerable to the French—worse even, than our representation of bloody murder on the stage. And if the eternal "triangle" seems the only subject popular in France, one easily perceives the reason. With us, the plot is always "In spite of everything, they were married." It interests because a courtship is carried on by the couple themselves and because the issue remains in doubt till the last moment. In France, where the parents arrange the marriage, what possible interest can be got out of it? The big, absorbing, thrilling story in France is not the founding of a home, it is the threatened disruption of a home. It begins with the married couple, and introduces a third party, who may wreck all. And, simply because this introduction of a third party is so rare an occurrence, the thing when it happens is tremendously stirring. In fact, it is pretty nearly the only situation capable of holding the interest of a French audience.

But oh, it is boresome, boresome! Monotonous, for one thing, to say nothing of its stupidity —that same miserable deception inflicted eternally on the French husband, who, if he be not on his guard by this time, richly deserves his misfortunes. And what a pity it seems—such exquisite literary art squandered upon a theme that may have its dramatic thrills and doubtless does, yet remains an ugly theme at best and by no means edifying!

Well, the French themselves concede its monotony and wish the everlasting "triangle" were banished forever and aye, and though perhaps they fail to recognize the degradation of literary art, they at least appreciate that such plays are not fit entertainment for *jeunes filles!*

Here, naturally enough, I am reminded again of the brilliant and cultured young French barrister who listened to my encomiums on the careful bringing up of French girls, and, having learned his English from some mischievous Americans, answered artlessly "Rats!" And I am also reminded of my good friend the Abbé, who so bitterly deplores the laxity of parenthood in France, especially as concerns the upbringing of *jeunes filles.* Moreover, I recall a shocking matinée at the Olympia, where, although certain features of the vaudeville were

of a character much too outrageous for an American burlesque show, the audience included scores and scores of *jeune filles,* brought there by their parents, and not a few of the young creatures still wore their hair down their backs. So there are exceptions—pretty numerous exceptions, I fear—to the rule that guards French girls against harm at public entertainments, and yet the rule remains and is enforced with rigor, on the whole, and quite properly. The spectacle of young girls flocking by the thousands to the sort of plays we allow our daughters to see, over here, is a scandal absolutely unheard of in France.

I think, too, that in judging the adult French tolerance for literary and dramatic improprieties, and for those of art and of real life as well, we should remember that, to the French, comparatively few things are indecent, and that, while this may have its disadvantages, morally, it may at the same time have its very pronounced advantages. For I doubt if prudery achieves only valuable results. As I look at it, the over-squeamish have detected impropriety where it scarcely so much as exists and where it might well be disregarded; the upshot is, they have contrived to fill their world with more or less fictitious indecencies—indecencies that

would not be there unless summoned up by morbid and priggish false modesty. When, for instance, the mere mention of a stocking sets a whole audience in a titter (and in America it too often does), I am inclined to wish myself back in France, where stockings (and a hundred other things we Americans consent to titter at) are not considered either funny or evil. For my own part, I believe that the indifference of the artist, the physician, the hospital nurse and the really typical Frenchman is preferable in the long run to the fifteen-year-old pruriency which, in America, quite generally underlies what passes for Puritanism. True, they have awful jokes in France and awful novels and awful plays, but in common fairness ought we not to recognize that nothing short of perfectly outrageous awfulness can appeal, in a Frenchman, to anything like fifteen-year-old pruriency?

A further advantage of the French attitude: In France, an expectant mother is not thought indecent. She is not supposed to skulk and hide. She is not snickered at. Instead, she is honored, and, go where she may, her condition makes every one eager to look out for her comfort and safety.

Now, when I say that fifteen-year-old pruriency is rare in France, I may perhaps seem to

be implying that the French temperament has been pretty generally misunderstood and pretty generally misrepresented, and upon my word I do believe it has. I do not regard the French as a fiery, passionate race. As compared with us Anglo-Saxons, I think they are cold.

It is not temperament, but constant suggestion, that has made the French the most sex-conscious people on earth. When practically all the funny papers and practically all the funny pictures and practically all the plays and stories and standing jokes harp eternally on sex, why, what else but an exaggerated sex-consciousness is to be expected?

Personally, I deplore a thousand wretched influences that are brought to bear upon the individual in France, but, for that very reason, I am reluctant to blame the individual for being affected by them. *Pauvre diable!* how can he help it? The entire history of France is strewn with scandals. He learns that kings, heroes, poets, sages, painters—all the "glories of the France," pretty nearly—were loose livers. He sees profligacy around him—not more profligacy than in other countries, I suppose, but more shamelessly unconcealed. If it lets him alone as he walks the street, it is rampant in a thousand cafés and ready to grab him by the arm in

the *promenoir* of the nearest music-hall. Even on his way to his work, innumerable shop-windows contain post-cards and cartoons of an appalling indecency, while the kiosks of the newsvendors have too often their stock of half-toned photographs wrapped in the tissue paper that satisfies the law while offering a constant incitement toward evil. And the gossip and the boasting and the jokes he hears, and the short stories he reads in a highly popular morning paper I could name—why, they are enough to blast the principles of a marble St. Anthony!

No, the wonderful thing is not that immorality should exist in France, even despite the essential coldness of the French temperament; the wonderful thing is that anything else beside immorality should exist there.

For France has never recovered from the moral injury she inflicted upon herself when she expelled the Huguenots. The very salt of the earth, they would inevitably have exerted a powerful influence for good. And France has always suffered from the exaggerated patriotism that makes Frenchmen reluctant to visit other countries and prevents their learning how their neighbors look upon certain matters which, in France, seem perfect because French. At present, Frenchmen go abroad even less than

they once did. Since 1870 they have been unwilling to travel in Germany, and the whole influence of the Touring-Club de France has tended to discourage travel in England, Spain, and Italy as well. "See your own country first," or French to that effect, is the Touring-Club's motto, only too faithfully followed. In consequence, many an object lesson that would otherwise be of benefit to the French fails to strike home, though perhaps it never would, very effectually, from mere travel. What I should like to see would be a wholesale exchange of children.

On a small scale, the exchange of children is already carried on. Small Pierre goes to live with Mr. and Mrs. Hodge, who, in return, send small Bobbie to live with M. and Mme. Lemaitre. Or perhaps it is some amiable Herr and Frau or some equally amiable Signor and Signora who swap little folks with Monsieur and Madame. The arrangement, when held to for a year or more, gives the children a capital notion of life abroad and every chance to see in what respects things are done better abroad than at home.

For her own advantage, I should like to humiliate France by having her youngsters come back, after sojourns elsewhere, and express

themselves as monstrously disgusted with the blemishes that are so tolerantly permitted to outrage decency and good taste in France. I should like them to plead for reform not so much because the better standards are more wholesome but because, in the long run, they are incomparably more agreeable.

In saying this, I have no intention to imply that there remains little hope of appealing with any success to the French conscience directly, though I am aware that there are those who wonder if such a thing as a French conscience ever existed—the people, for example, who keep reminding you of the French fishwife who confessed, "Ah, yes! I said my fish were fresh when they were not, but God knows it was to my advantage!" Far from agreeing with such cynics, I am prepared to recognize not only the existence of a French conscience but, on occasion, its extraordinary capacity for overwork, as in the case of a well known French artist who, all his life, has refused to draw "academies" because he disapproves of the employment of nude models.

So they have their prudes in France, just as elsewhere. There was quite a ripple of disapproval when Miss Isadora Duncan first danced in France, and it was a ferocious time

they had at the Sorbonne over the use of Smollett's works in the English literature course, and when the Salon is about to open it is swooped down upon by censors representing the police, and, if you visit a French bathing beach, you will see that the style of bathing-dress generally in vogue is modest enough and ugly enough and inconvenient enough to suit the imaginary elders and deacons who make their annual noisy descent upon Asbury Park in the newspapers. As for the sensational costumes, it is only actresses and *demimondaines* or girl athletes who affect them. Furthermore, Paris has its Comstock Society, presided over for many a year by Senator Béranger.

I am no great admirer of Comstock Societies, and yet I realize their usefulness, especially in a capital that is overrun with pleasure-seekers who have left their principles at home. It is the pleasure-seekers who purchase the indecent photographs and crowd the indecent music halls and support the indecent cafés.

But while prudery (and crankiness, more or less) are essential to the success of a Comstock Society, you soon discover more potent, because more normal, forces at work for good. Chief of these, I believe, is the influence of English ideals, which, thanks to the Franco-British

*entente,* are gaining ground in France. Indeed, it may yet be that the England whose proximity has so long visited upon France its hordes of scamps and rakes, may yet accomplish a very considerable purification of French life.

I am free to admit, of course, that just at present the influence of English ideals is most conspicuous among *les snobs* of the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, and that the rather abrupt substitution of British for Gallic standards may work some incidental mischief, as all transitions do, and yet it seems to me that in the end real benefit must come of it. For I have lived with French Protestants; and Protestantism, in France, is refreshingly English—oh, very, very, very refreshingly English!—and meanwhile so charmingly French!

It has all the sweetness and vivacity of the French spirit, but has also a freedom, a vigor, and a fine cleanliness that are essentially British and aim consciously to be so. When they can, the French Protestants employ real English nurses—not the disguised French peasant-girls who pass for English till you hear them speak—and the little Protestants learn English in their babyhood. Hence the ease with which they come to read English later on. And hence, in turn, their easy—in fact, inevitable—

absorption of English ideas and their avoidance of the vulgarizing influence that is all but omnipresent in French fiction. Moreover, they travel in England, and intermarriage is far from rare, and so, in many ways at once, the French type becomes Anglicized in the best sense without losing anything of what is beautiful and admirable and a thousand times enviable in the French type.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Of Holy Church*

HOW was it, in the last chapter? Did it seem to you odd and unreasonable that, beyond a lament for the expulsion of the Huguenots, centuries ago, our discussion of French morals should have avoided mentioning the religious instinct which, to many minds, is the very foundation of morality? Or did it, on the other hand, seem an inevitable omission, occasioned by the very general absence of religion in a nation of Free-Thinkers?

In either case, you have been somewhat less than just. For religion, in France, appears so exceedingly vital an affair as to warrant discussion by itself and on its own account; and as for the French Free-Thinkers, why, are they not the most religious of all?

Honestly, I do believe they are—that is, if ardor counts. They are all on fire with a sav-

age, passionate enthusiasm for their faith-in-no-faith. Instead of displaying a mere supercilious indifference to religion, in the way our American Free-Thinkers do, these Frenchmen fly out at it, so militant is their faith-in-no-faith and so intense their devotion. The Catholics may grow cold, now and then, and so may the Protestants; the Free-Thinkers never.

We first encountered them at Nîmes on Easter Sunday, when the streets were filled with devout Catholics on their way to church. Down upon those crowds rained thousands of leaflets from upper windows, and, sure enough, the leaflets turned out to be atheistic tracts.

And those were the days of a vastly more brutal persecution. Monasteries were being broken up, convents emptied, schools closed, and the separation of church and state fervently demanded in the Chambre des Deputés. Separation was a *fait accompli* of long standing, when we visited France this last time, but persecution had only begun to subside. We found the government threatening to expel the Little Sisters of the Assumption, who served as nurses among the very poorest of the poor and had so endeared themselves to the people that protests against the Government's policy reached the newspapers not only from distinguished French-

men like Pierre Loti but actually from anarchists and Jews.

In a few years more, I suppose, such attacks as this upon helpless nuns will have ceased, but it will take great, great changes to remove the spirit that has monumentalized Free-Thinking and erected insults to Catholicism in bronze, in marble, and in solid masonry. For instance, that statue to Ernest Renan in the very heart of Catholic Brittany, or, a yet more glaring case, the Free-Thinkers' efforts to disfigure the beautiful new basilica that crowns the Butte Montmartre in Paris.

No doubt you have been amazed, when strolling the Grande Boulevards, to glance up a sufficiently commonplace cross street and catch a glimpse of what seems at first a dazzling white cloud and then a mosque with soaring domes high up on a distant hill. The hill is the Butte Montmartre, the mosque in reality no mosque but the exquisite Sacré-Cœur.

A mere glimpse shows you that millions must have been spent in constructing this enormous Catholic temple, and yet it cost many more millions to establish the foundations you cannot see. They go down through the hill to a point lower than the bed of the Seine, for, so insecure is the substance of the Butte, no less drastic

precautions would have guarded against collapse.

It is the fashion, I know, to affect a disdain for the Sacré-Cœur, just as it is always the fashion to despise a modern building. Nevertheless, I venture the prediction that this masterpiece of contemporary architecture will come to be regarded as one of the loveliest in Europe. View it from the Boulevard Montparnasse, or, at close range, from the roof of the Printemps, or, to see how it dominates all Paris, from the distant heights of Saint-Cloud, and tell me if it fails to make your heart leap within you. I think you will realize—indeed that you will be unable to help realizing—the pride every French Catholic feels when he beholds those soaring domes and considers what a reply they are to the taunt that his is no longer a living faith.

So it is there, on the crest of the Butte-Montmartre and directly next the new basilica, that the Free-Thinkers of the municipal administration have chosen to construct a reservoir. Not content with that, the Free-Thinkers have secured a bit of ground directly in front of the Sacré-Cœur itself and erected a monument to an obscure and unimportant young fellow who, a very long time ago, was set upon and killed

by a Catholic mob for refusing to salute a procession.

Nevertheless, it does not seem to me that anti-Catholicism has made any really overwhelming alterations in the look of things in France. True, the crucifix is banished from the courts of justice, and religious processions in the open air quite generally forbidden, and the names of saints erased from ever so many street-corners, and a good many sacred buildings given over to secular uses, like the former Seminary of Saint-Sulpice which now belongs to the Luxembourg. Here and there even a church is secularized—notably the one that has become a Musée des Arts et des Métiers. But the great church holidays remain—Reveillon, Noël, Micarême, Ascension Day, and the rest—and the number of curés and abbés appears not to have diminished, and now and then you encounter a very curious survival of reverence, as in the Free-Thinkers' reluctance to meddle with the Panthéon.

A singular institution, the Panthéon. In its capacity as the French Westminster Abbey, it shelters the tombs of the illustrious dead—among them Voltaire and Zola, along with numerous other Free-Thinkers of both modern and by-gone days. And the Panthéon, while once a church, is a church no longer. Yet the cross

still surmounts its splendid dome, and the statues and mural paintings within the edifice still glorify Saint-Vincent, Saint-Denis, Saint-Martin, Sainte-Genéviève, and the ever adorable Jeanne d'Arc.

Concerning Jeanne, a very curious situation has arisen and one that hardly reflects much distinction on the sagacity of the Free-Thinkers. Just as the Blessed Maid was about to be canonized by holy church, they established a national holiday in her honor—out of patriotism, purely, and without taking into consideration the advantage that would accrue to the Catholic cause when a saint was thus recognized as a national asset.

We happened to be in Paris when this decree by the French government was issued, and what struck us as remarkable was the closeness with which it followed upon the Catholics' celebration of the Maid's five-hundredth anniversary and upon the concessions the festival involved. Even in Paris, the very citadel of French infidelity, Catholics nailed Jeanne d'Arc's shield upon their walls, with its sword and crown and golden fleur-de-lys, and flung out her blue-and-white oriflamme. Despite the law against religious processions in the open air, Catholics marched through the streets and loaded flowers

upon "la Pucelle's" monument in the Place de Rivoli till only the head of her statue remained visible. To be sure, they carried no banners and they marched without music and refrained from singing or speechmaking, and yet it was a religious procession, for all that, and, though everybody recognized it as such, no one interfered.

However, the gorgeous procession concluding the service at Notre-Dame stayed indoors, as the law required, though it seemed as if very nearly all Paris had come indoors to watch it. And remember, it cost money to go indoors at Notre-Dame that day.

But oh, it was worth it, ten thousand times worth it, for, besides the superb spectacle there was a musical sensation of the very highest order—a brass band that crowded the whole of one transept and filled the church with such melody as I have never heard elsewhere. It in no wise resembled the sound of brass. In those vast spaces beneath those resonant stone vaults, it was more like violin music raised to the *n*th power—incredibly sweet and vibrant and thrilling and majestic. As for the procession, I have seen still finer ones, especially in the ancient cathedral at Rouen—or am I deceived by a recollection grown unduly radiant in the years

that have gone by since that wonderful afternoon? Perhaps. And perhaps the experience at Rouen was the more moving because so unexpected.

We had not heard that anything unusual was preparing at the cathedral that Sunday. We went late and without premeditation and from mere tourist curiosity, and it surprised us to find the enormous nave thronged to overflowing, and the aisles thronged also, and a great concourse of churchmen and prelates filling the sanctuary. How we got seats, I have always wondered, yet somehow we succeeded, and had scarcely recovered from our astonishment and begun to take in the unutterable beauty of the scene and the splendor of the music and the impressiveness of those reverent multitudes when, above the peal of the organ, we heard the clank of iron on stone and saw two huge, bearded "Swiss," in medieval uniforms and carrying immense halberds, proceeding slowly from the chancel and beating the metal-bound stocks of their weapons on the slabs of the floor as they went.

Down the central aisle they came, followed by choir after choir and by clergy and tonsured monks and great dignitaries in gorgeous vestments and men bearing crosses and banners and

canopies, while the music rose to ecstasies and, all the while, the solemn metallic clank kept slowly beating time. Reaching the west doors, the procession divided, passing back up the side aisles and uniting again at the sanctuary steps. Never before or since have I beheld anything half so magnificent.

Once in the world, the procession would have passed out into the open streets and gone marching and singing through Rouen, just as, once in the world, a Jeanne d'Arc procession at Notre Dame would have refused to remain indoors. In these days, however, the law forbids, partly by way of oppressing the church and partly as a precaution against riots. And yet, here and there in France, a mayor declines to enforce the law. It is only a year or two since we saw altars erected in the public squares at Chartres and a procession going from altar to altar and holding open-air services.

But while a Free-Thinking government quite uniformly "suppresses" religious processions out of doors—even those of the Salvation Army (*l'Armée de Salut,* which, simply because of this one prohibition, has failed to attain any noteworthy success in France)—something very like devotions are permitted out of doors when they have the appearance of business. No one

can watch the sale of rosaries, crucifixes, medals, prayer-books, and all that, without being conscious of its genuinely religious meaning. The faithful buy in the same spirit that they cross themselves or kneel in prayer, and yet, thus far at least, the traffic goes on without interference in the streets and public squares, and a most charming sight it is.

Stepping out, one January morning, into the Place du Panthéon, I noticed that the sections of a great many little portable shops lay neatly piled in a long, long row in front of the lovely church of Saint-Étienne du Mont. All day the work of setting them up continued and at nightfall their lights began to glimmer and the vendors were arranging their wares.

This meant that the morrow would witness the opening of the annual *neuvaine,* and that for a week and more Saint-Étienne would be continually thronged with pilgrims. Service would follow service throughout the day and far into the night. The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris would come. The shrine of Sainte-Geneviève would blaze with innumerable candles. There would be marvelous processions—of nuns and novices, of priests and singing boys, and of religious societies holding aloft the banners of the saint and carrying her sacred relics.

It was impressive, gloriously impressive, all this, not merely as a spectacle but by reason of the proof that Catholicism in France had so triumphantly outlived a thousand persecutions. And yet I could not but feel that the most significant side of the affair was this sale of rosaries and crucifixes and prayer-books and images outside. Despite the direst animosities, a Free-Thinking municipal administration still tolerated the trade in religious articles and allowed it the use of a public highway. A coincidence: The row of little portable shops stood literally within the shadow of the Panthéon, which, though no longer a church, is still surmounted with the cross and still adorned with pictures and statues of the saints.

Then, too, there is something very like a procession, all through May (the "month of Mary") when children take their first communion and when, in every street of every town or village, it seems to have snowed little girls. How lovely they are, in their white dresses reaching to their toes, and how majestically attended by "parents" (meaning fathers, mothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, etc.) in their holiday best! And after the service, what a sight they are in the tea-rooms, devouring bon-bons or beatific *petits gâteaux!*

But while all this amounts to a first-class Catholic demonstration, it never occurs to the Free-Thinkers to decry it. On the contrary, they relish its delightful picturesqueness and tender sentiment.

Sometimes I almost think that modern France might say, as did Lacordaire, "I have a religious heart, but a very incredulous mind." For, underneath all the hatred of the clergy and all the cries of "A bas la soutane!" and all the malice that tears down crucifixes and expels nuns and prohibits open-air services, there lies a deep-seated, ineradicable predisposition toward religious reverence, and not the loudest arguments of the most scientific unbelievers can entirely prevent its finding now and then some unconscious self-expression. Moreover, I am persuaded that the anti-clerical uprising which culminated in the separation of church and state might perhaps have been avoided if the Catholics had not displayed a zeal outrunning caution. It was they who risked security by playing politics. It was they who, by ignoring what seemed to them unrighteous laws, extended their organization in ways that brought them within the reach of formal justice—whether of inherent justice, I greatly doubt. And it was Rome, not Paris, that tactlessly precipitated a crisis at the

last. When President Loubet paid his visit to the King of Italy, thus affronting the Pope, the worst consequences might still have been avoided had the Vatican uttered the expressions of grief customary under such circumstances. Instead, the Vatican issued a circular note denouncing France before the other Catholic Powers—after which deplorable indiscretion, what wonder that the French Government took the final steps in a business long contemplated but, till then, held in abeyance?

Now, I do not in the least desire to minimize the results of separation. It is true, of course, that the blow fell with equal severity upon all sects, Jews and Protestants as well as Catholics. It is also true that the Catholic organization had never been entirely supported by the government. It is even true that, under a system providing thoroughgoing independence, like that enjoyed by Catholicism in America, the French Catholics might be better off than before. But it became evident soon enough that the so-called separation was only a new bondage. Although the government withdrew its financial aid, it continued to interfere in the affairs of the church, and not from any genial motives, either.

It is a distressing situation, all around, and I

suppose that to an observer only superficially acquainted with French character, it might seem to indicate just what the anti-clericals say it does—namely, a hatred of religion itself —whereas I seriously doubt it.

If religion itself were so detestable to Frenchmen, then how should we manage to account for the respect, if I may not go so far as to say admiration, with which Frenchmen regard the Protestant *pasteurs?*

I saw a magnificent example of this when it came time for me to appear before the judges at the Palais de Justice in the matter of adopting our little French baby. We had captured that *bel enfant,* and fetched him to Neuilly, and established him in the garden, where his adorers rained compliments upon him; he was "*un petit coco,*" "*un bijou,*" "*un trésor,*" in fact, a "gross rabbit of love" (*gros lapin d'amour*). And we had looked up adoption in the *Code Civile,* where we found that in order to adopt a "gross rabbit of love," I must be fifty years old, childless, and a Frenchman, while the "gross rabbit" must be twenty-one and consent to the adoption—rather tough on both the "rabbit" and myself, except for the existence of what the French call *tutelle,* a form of guardianship that amounts practically to the same

thing. Accordingly, I had written to the Attorney-General (Monsieur le Procureur de la République) and, after a fortnight or so, there had arrived M. Ollive, plain-clothes-man from the Sureté, who, after receiving an enthusiastic account of the "gross rabbit," demanded my birth-certificate, my marriage-certificate, my address, my American address, my business, the names of my parents, the dates and places of their births and their marriage, etc., etc., and corresponding documents concerning the "gross rabbit's" new mother and her parents, from generation unto generation, world without end, amen! Naturally, we had begged for time in which to order our attorneys to procure all necessary sheep-skins, thumb-prints, and other credentials, since at the moment it was impossible for either of us to prove that we had ever been born.

And at last there had come Monsieur le Procureur's invitation, bidding me appear at the Palais de Justice and have it out with Monsieur le Substitut and his fellow judges, who, if they thought proper, would constitute me *tuteur* of the "gross rabbit."

My heart was in my mouth, for I had talked the thing over with far too many Frenchmen, every one of whom had looked solemn, and said,

always in the same grave tone, "But his *service militaire,* monsieur, his *service militaire!*"

In other words, I was to expect that the judges would object to my taking the "gross rabbit" out of France, as this, in a country where population was declining, would be reducing the future French army by one more *défenseur de la patrie.* Certain sure, just as soon as the "gross rabbit" turned twenty-one, the authorities would be after him with a blue jacket in one hand and a pair of bricky-red breeches in the other, to make him a *piou-piou,* and march him around behind the tricolor for three mortal years. Imagine the rumpus in the France, if, when wanted, the "gross rabbit" should be a citizen of the America and exceedingly disinclined to enter a French barracks!

I had an answer ready, nevertheless. I was prepared to say, "When he is twenty-one, he will be his own master. If he refuses to be a French soldier, I can't force him. If he insists on being a French soldier, I can't stop him. *C'est son affaire.*"

My French friends seemed to think this tolerably good logic, but when I considered what its effect upon the judges might be, I shuddered. And when the fated day arrived and I passed

through the Hall of the Lost Footsteps (Salle des Pas Perdus) and went up a stairway close to the Conciergerie, where Marie Antoinette had been imprisoned, I believe I was as terrified as any victim of the Revolution.

I can see them now, those judges. There were five of them, with silver on their caps and ermine on the sleeves of their flowing black robes, and they sat around a green table in a sumptuous court room.

At first, it was clear that they disapproved. *What!* Were foreigners to run away with French babies as easily as all this? Good gracious! But when they got well into the case, and discovered that I proposed to take a "gross rabbit" for the sheer love of him, and that there was not so much as a *sou* involved anywhere, one of them cried out, enthusiastically, "Ah, 'tis admirable! 'Tis an action noble," and, from then on, they gave all their attention to learning what I meant to do for the "gross rabbit" and how able I was to do it. From stern and awful magistrates, they became the tenderest of *pères de famille.* And so they gave me the "gross rabbit"—bless him!—and the whole affair went through with a rush, and the terrible obstacle of *la service militaire* was not even mentioned.

Now, here is the point: With me went a Protestant *pasteur,* to do my pleading for me —as well he might, since he had consented to serve as vice-guardian (*subrogé tuteur*)—and to him I owed my easy triumph. From the outset, he controlled the situation. The judges deferred to him, not he to the judges. It was only necessary for them to hear him through to be convinced. They said to one another, "Ça va! This foreigner—by blue, is he not vouched for by a *pasteur,* a man honorable, a man respected?" Agnostics, presumably, all five of them, they nevertheless revered the man and his office and, little though they would have been inclined to admit it, even the Christianity his office served.

This scene in the courtroom seemed to give me the most touching insight I had ever had into the French heart, and I wish I could call it my reward for falling in love with a church. It was not. My friend the *pasteur* would have gone with me, just the same, if I had never become enamored of the little Protestant *temple* in the *Quartier Latin.*

Looking back, it appears an odd experience—falling in love with a church, there in that Bohemia of the *Rive Gauche*—and yet how naturally it came about! I wanted to accustom

my ear to the ripple of spoken French. What more reasonable, then, than to seek out a French Protestant service, where I should hear only the best French, faultlessly pronounced, and where I should know beforehand the drift of what was being said? Accordingly, I consulted Baedeker, and, of several churches, selected the nearest.

So far, mere utilitarian practicality; but, once I had set forth, I got the sensation of doing something extraordinary and, I may almost say, adventurous. Waiters were furbishing up the cafés for the rush of Sunday drinkers and idlers and pleasure-seekers. In the Rue Soufflot, ever so many small shops were open already. Family parties had begun to start out for a day's pleasure. Tennis players, all in white and using the long French racquet, were at it with a vim in the Luxembourg Garden. In short, it was the usual holiday, workaday, anything but Sunday-like French Sunday, and the few churchgoers I met seemed Catholics without exception.

I realized, then, how it feels to be a Protestant in a country where Protestantism still protests. One is conscious of going against the tide, of resisting not only the national predisposition toward Catholicism, but the contemporary relapse into paganism. And the curious thrill

of isolation was sharpened somewhat as I recognized that, of all the towers and spires and domes that break the skyline of Paris, not one belonged to a French Protestant church. No, not one. Even the Oratoire, with its monument to Coligny within sight of that tower of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois where hangs the bell that gave the signal for St. Bartholomew's—even the Oratoire would escape notice, save for the marble monument in the Rue de Rivoli, and it is not remarkable that tourists should visit France over and over again without so much as suspecting the existence of a French Protestant church.

For they are rare, and small, usually—those churches—and the one in the *Quartier Latin* seems hardly to be a church at all. Indeed, it looks enough like a school until certain trifling architectural details reveal themselves, on closer scrutiny, to be less secular than they at first appear.

As you pass in, you get an impression of bareness, of austerity, of studied and almost Quakerish simplicity. It is disappointing. You expect a more distinctive local color, and the place seems as prosaic as a *bureau des postes.*

But when you have ascended the stairs and

come to the door of the auditorium, you gain a momentary satisfaction. For lo, here stands a young man in a swallow-tail coat with red and blue ribbons and gold fringes making a kind of epaulette for one shoulder. This is the *bedeau* (beadle), and by the red and blue ribbons and gold fringes you know him for a Protestant version of the Swiss. His function, they tell me, is to annoy the congregation by walking about during the service and doing to windows and doors the opposite of what people want. Nevertheless, it will be ages before anybody dares suggest the suppression of the *bedeau.* Like the *huissiers* of the courtrooms or like the maid summoned on Madame's receiving day to open the door or like the very nearly useless *concierge,* this nuisance of a *bedeau* impersonates formality and respectability.

But, aside from the *bedeau* and his uniform, everything within the church seems determined to avoid show and avoid picturesqueness, and especially to avoid luxury. Only the aisles are carpeted. Instead of upholstered pews, there are rows of straight-backed, unvarnished, rush-bottomed chairs, as in a cathedral. The pulpit furnishings, while dignified, are plain to the point of austerity. The walls and ceiling and gallery have been painted a cold

white and, save for a narrow border of blue, the very windows are white.

By contrast, our churches at home look like immense drawing rooms, or perhaps boudoirs, and it strikes me that this effect suggests rather the ease and comfort of our worshipers than a devotion to things spiritual.

Soon enough, however, you forget the dreariness of a French Protestant church, it is so crowded to overflowing with French Protestants. They are a little sect, and know it, and take every possible opportunity to turn out in force and show off what numbers they have.

And how lustily they sing! Everybody sings, even little boys, and this is perhaps because French Protestantism avoids adopting that somewhat questionable institution, the paid choir. No solos. No quartettes. Congregational singing, invariably, led by a volunteer chorus in the gallery.

During the prayers, the congregation stands, with heads bowed—a better custom, I think, than ours. For I am persuaded that the real cause of drowsiness in church is not the sermon, however prosy, but the way we have of sitting bent over during the long prayer. If I wanted to benumb a congregation into something awfully like the hypnotic sleep, I should use pre-

cisely this means. In the French Protestant churches, it is possible that now and then some one may fall asleep, but if so, it is a thing I never witnessed.

No doubt you will bow your head, when you stand with the others, at the *pasteur's* words, "*Prions-nous,*" though I confess that more than once I have been too interested in the *pasteur* to do so. I love to watch that fervent face, and to see the clasped hands quiver. Despite the absence of excitability (for there is nothing there to suggest what we call emotionalism) you feel the presence of a deep earnestness all through the service, and never more so than during the prayer.

It is a brief prayer. Even the longest prayer is brief. So are the scripture readings, and, in fact, the service itself. Considering how brief it is, you wonder that time should be allotted the elder or deacon or clerk (I never quite made out which) who reads the notices from a desk just below the pulpit.

But when I say service, I do not mean it in the sense the Episcopalians give it. Of service in that sense there is very little, and, just as in our ordinary American churches at home, the main thing is the sermon.

Probably, when I speak of the sermon, you

see a black-robed *pasteur,* wearing white "bands" like those familiar in portraits of Pasteur Wagner and haranguing the congregation with very much the wild-eyed fury of an *avocat* holding forth at the Palais de Justice. Nothing, really, could be further from the truth.

Oh, the gown and the bands may be there, I admit, though full as likely the *pasteur* wears a frock coat and white cravat, but his bearing is neither lawyerlike nor, to our way of thinking, clerical. Instead, it is military. He has the air of a man looked up to and obeyed; and no wonder, when you realize the attitude of his people toward him and the enormous influence he wields.

Several happy circumstances conspire to make him the hero he is. For one thing Protestantism in France is not split up, as with us, into cliques and clans organized on the basis of theological crotchets. In our understanding of the word, French Protestantism recognizes no denominations, and, to the best I could learn, the slight differences that obtain are chiefly those regarding organization and finance. For instance, there are the so-called "free" churches, which never accepted subsidies from the government, and there are the churches which once did, but, for excellent reasons, do

not at present. Beyond these trifling distinctions, hardly any lines of cleavage whatever. Consequently, the churches fraternize—or, rather, the churches are all one church—and a *pasteur* of ability becomes a country-wide celebrity instead of being merely the very limited force for usefulness he would otherwise have remained.

Furthermore, the churches make the most of the opportunities this opens up. Instead of forcing a congregation to listen to one preacher, month after month and year after year, they arrange a system of rotation and a program as elaborate, pretty nearly, as a page from the "Indicator of the Roads of Iron"—names of *pasteurs,* names of churches, and dates at which the various clergymen will address the various parishes.

So far as the preaching is concerned, this has simply enormous advantages. In the first place, no congregation is bored by having a steady diet of one and the same everlasting sort of sermon from one and the same everlasting individual. That, in itself, is enough to enhance a minister's prestige. No one gets tired of him.

Then, too, it gives him both the leisure and the incentive to prepare magnificent sermons,

they are so few and repeated to so many, many congregations. Under such conditions, it would take an exceedingly stolid fellow not to exert himself to the utmost, and France is anything but the right country in which to look for stolidity.

Oh, I suppose there must be some slight incidental draw-backs to the arrangement that provides for rotation; strange if there were not. But the only one I have ever heard Protestants mention is a tendency to become unduly attached to one preacher and follow him about from parish to parish. I can well understand the temptation, though what struck me most was the extraordinary prevalence of good preaching, so that it mattered little which man one went to hear—indeed, when one has come home from France, it is remarkable how all those splendid *pasteurs* seem to be represented by a single type and almost by a single individual.

One sees the stalwart, erect, soldierly figure; the strong, sensitive face, at once intellectual and sympathetic; the gestures, gaining in vigor as the sermon proceeds and differing from the pulpit gestures we are familiar with in that the emphasis is generally upward. And one remembers the fine, ringing voice, never rising beyond the fervor that is consistent with dig-

nity yet always expressive of underlying emotion.

As for the sermon itself, it is developed without notes and in the characteristic French manner. Slowly, patiently, deliberately, the man interprets his text and analyzes it and establishes (albeit with extreme simplicity) the philosophic foundations for his discourse. This accomplished, the rate quickens. His face lights up. His hands move in involuntary gestures. His thought takes the color of poetic enthusiasm. He becomes eloquent, and his eloquence increases through passages that proceed from the practical and human to the highest reaches of spiritual exaltation, yet without giving any impression of extravagance. He carries you with him. Indeed, he would carry you with him were his expansiveness much more fiery than it is.

For, from our point of view, there is something wonderful about the French Protestant sermon, a quality invariably religious. At home, we hardly know what to expect when a minister stands up to preach. An editorial, it may be, or perhaps a sociological lecture, or, like as not, an essay better suited to a magazine. It may concern itself with almost anything from science to politics and excuse its

utterly prosaic secularism by tacking on a remark or so at the end to the effect that, "brethren, this is true also in religion." Why we call such preachers preachers, heaven knows, for they do everything but preach, and, whenever one of them really sets about preaching (by which I mean treating of religion, not merely now and then and as if begging our pardon for mentioning the subject, but treating of religion constantly and boldly and with a noble fervor) he becomes a celebrity. Whereas, among the French Protestants all the preachers preach and preach constantly.

Moreover, they practise. I am sure of that; otherwise how could they retain the reverent esteem of their people, who, I believe, are every whit as devout as the old Huguenots, their ancestors?

But ought I, really, to leave it at that and give the impression, too widely accepted already, that the French Protestants are wholly French? This would be overlooking the very thing one notices first—or at least, that I noticed first. It was the frequency of foreign names—English, notably—and of people whose names were French but who came from Switzerland, perhaps, or, if born in France, were not of unmixed French blood. And yet it is a

trivial matter, comparatively, this presence of aliens and the children of aliens among the descendants of the old Huguenots, for the French Protestants belong mainly to the well-to-do classes, and, in France, it is the well-to-do classes who most commonly show the effects of immigration and intermarriage.

I suppose certain very pronounced traits of French Protestantism are traceable to just this —for instance, their fondness for English books and English manners and (a wondrous phenomenon in France!) their support of a total abstinence society.

Still, there remain sufficient traits that are distinctively French. I cannot imagine English or American Protestant churches organized with so little reference to creed. Nothing short of the consciousness of numerical inferiority, I suppose, could induce these dear people in France to disregard doctrinal difficulties and band together with such a magnificent determination. Moreover, it seems to me a thoroughly French idea they have of Sunday—almost a Catholic idea, I may say. On Sunday morning they go faithfully to church, yet it never occurs to them that anything would be gained by denying themselves the right to en-

joy the remainder of the day in any way they see fit.

Have I spoken of them too lovingly, too admiringly? I think not, though there was some risk, I admit, for they stood by us in time of trouble and it was they who found us our beautiful little French baby. After that, you can't blame me if I have only the kindest and most affectionate remembrance of them and of one in particular, who is a saint.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Children*

WE are going deeper, you see. We began by considering the French physique and the French temperament and the French intellect, as we found them manifested, this way and that, but presently we became more serious still, and studied the moral and religious consciousness of the French. Little by little, we have tried to get inside their very hearts, and, not unnaturally, this brings us to speak of their passionate love for their children.

Now, it may seem rather odd, to an American, this declaration of mine in which I call the French love of children so passionate. Many a reader, I imagine, will retort that if the love of children in France were a passionate love, then assuredly there would be more children in France. For the children in France are woe-

fully few. Statistics prove it. Some years, the population remains at a standstill. Other years, it actually declines.

And this in the face of statistics showing that pretty nearly everybody of marriageable age in France is married. Rare, indeed, is the "old boy," equally rare the "old girl," and no wonder; for while bachelorhood may be tolerable, even gay, in France, old maidenhood is an inferno of outrageous restrictions, so severe that a spinster of forty has hardly more freedom than a *jeune fille*. Such being the case, parents arrange a daughter's marriage almost as they might bail a son out of jail. Only the dowriless girl is doomed to single blessedness.

Extraordinary, you protest, that a nation of married folks should be a nation where race-suicide becomes so appalling a menace; especially as, to all appearance, no such thing as race suicide exists in France. Every other block, anywhere in a French city, you see the sign "Sage-Femme," and France seems chiefly a children's country. In the parks, what a profusion of tiny swings, tiny merry-go-rounds, and hilarious Punch-and-Judy shows, to say nothing of the boats to sail and the toy aeroplanes to fly, and the hoops to roll, and the goats and the donkeys to drive. Ah, *quel plaisir* to "con-

duct an ass"! And in town, what shops for children—the "Yellow Dwarf," the "Baby Glutton," the "Paradise of Infants." And what hosts of children at play, whipping their tops or going in for a kind of French hop-Scotch, with the territory elaborately chalked off on the sidewalk and the goal marked "Ciel!"

Meanwhile, were ever little people more evidently adored by their elders? If Bébé howls, a crowd collects. When Bébé is "sage" and you bid him "Bon jour" as he goes by in his carriage, Madame smiles and Monsieur tips his hat. Whereupon you are free to remark, "Qu'il est mignon!"—and will perhaps give offense if you don't.

For Bébé is King of Paris, they say, and it takes quite a crowd, as a rule, sufficiently to admire one infant, while even an urchin of five or six can command something of a retinue now and then. I once saw small Philippe lose his ball in the fountain. Responsive to the small Philippe's lamentations, came first an aged *rentier,* then a couple of artillerymen, and finally a *gendarme,* who, by their concerted efforts, managed to recover the ball. It was a beautiful occasion, and great joy found expression on every hand when *le petit* and his ball were at last reunited.

Children everywhere, children universally adored, and yet, for all that, these gloomy statistics! Pray, how can such things be?

Some insist that the statistics are not in reality so depressing; that there are babies enough born in France, but that only a far too meager proportion of them ever grows up. When, however, you compare the French birthrate with that in other countries, you see how very much too easily satisfied these optimists are.

And if the tumultuous presence of little children, everywhere in France, seems to discount the value of statistics, it must be remembered that French cities are a lot more densely populated than ours. For fifty children, there may actually be fifty-two grownups, with a deathrate exceeding the birthrate.

And the fact remains that the birthrate is intentionally kept down. There even exists an association called the Neo-Malthusians, whose program is race-suicide. Not content with preaching it to adults, they have been caught indoctrinating school-children—terribly punished for it, to be sure, for the law has little mercy on that sort of abomination, but not punished enough to make them abandon their campaign.

Naturally, the mere fact of the law's dealing so savagely with the Neo-Malthusians is proof that public sentiment in France abhors race-suicide. No wonder! Every few years the old menace of a European war has bobbed up again, and France has asked herself how and where she was to find soldiers. Meanwhile, Germany's surplus population has displayed a tendency to overflow upon France. All along the French Riviera, every hotel became German, and this, though by no means serious on its own account, was gravely disturbing in view of what the Germans had been doing in the Low Countries and in Northern Italy, where, by dint of a "pacific penetration," they were beginning to accomplish what was once possible only as the result of conquest. It has been with real anxiety, then, that France looked forward to this process of infiltration by which the native stock would give place, little by little, to aliens; and the anxiety grew acute when France considered the dangers such colonies of foreigners on French soil would involve in case of war.

From the military view-point, if from no other, race-suicide is a tremendous evil, and the French Government realized it, and a mere epitome of the remedies proposed at odd times in the *Chambre des Deputés* would fill a consider-

able volume. Nor are the Deputies alone in their terror. In French newspapers and magazines, you keep seeing that awful headline, "La Dépopulation." Frenchmen read and shudder. The thing horrifies them. It is the national nightmare.

Then why, in a country of married folks, a country passionately devoted to children, a country scared for its very life by the annual census returns—why, in such a country as that, does the curse find no abatement? I can answer in the words of a very distinguished Frenchman, who said, "The reason we do not have children is: Because we love them so."

*C'est dommage, mais c'est vrai.* Because they love them so, the French refuse to have children. In a nutshell, that is the whole story.

Of course you will object (and quite properly) that no nutshell can contain the whole of such an enormously important story. But, if you are called upon to give a single brief explanation of race-suicide in France, this is the one nearest the truth. Because French parents so tenderly love the children already born, they are unwilling that more should be born.

A couple will deliberately figure out their children's prospects—thus: One child, better prospects than the parents had. Two children, the

same prospects the parents had. Three children, not such good prospects as the parents had. Four children, prospects decidedly worse than the parents had.

Let us suppose, then, that Monsieur and Madame are at present blessed with two charming *gosses,* by name Marcel and Victorine. Unless unforeseen calamities should befall, Marcel and Victorine will take almost exactly the places of Monsieur and Madame. In the France of tomorrow, the family will have held its own.

But now let us contemplate the possibility of a third charming *gosse.* Obviously this would mean that what is at present divided in halves for the children would thenceforth be divided in thirds. It would mean sacrificing Marcel and Victorine to an as yet non-existent new-comer, and the thought of sacrificing Marcel and Victorine in the smallest conceivable degree, no matter how urgent the reason, fills Monsieur and Madame with unutterable consternation.

Incidentally, Monsieur and Madame realize that the whole family would retrograde. They would have to take a less elegant apartment in a less distinguished street. They would have to dismiss a servant or two. There would be less to spend upon the refinements of life and on

education for the children. The France of tomorrow would look with perceptibly less reverence upon the family name. But I am convinced that it is the parental instinct, rather than the tribal instinct, that affords the determining motive. Monsieur and Madame decide not to sacrifice Marcel and Victorine.

All this, as you see, comes back to a question of money, and in France money is very nearly three times as important a consideration as it is here. Let us trace the matter through, partly for its own interest, but also and more especially because the upshot has a direct bearing upon Monsieur and Madame and their attitude toward the as yet non-existent new-comer.

Money, I assert, is very nearly three times as important a consideration in France as it is in America. For one thing, the years of a Frenchman's money-making are numbered. At fifty, he will retire, and live on his *rentes,* and play croquet in the park with other jolly old duffers or, fish-pole in hand, sit eternally by the edge of the Seine, where it is believed that the ancient Romans (or, should I say, the original Parisii?) once caught a fish.

Quite possibly it was selfishness that actuated the Frenchman who first established the custom of knocking off work at fifty. Possibly some

grains of selfishness persist in the Frenchmen who continue the custom. But it is only fair to remember that customs die hard, in France and elsewhere; and besides, the usual Frenchman contrives to accomplish enough work by the time he is fifty to entitle him to pursue that prehistoric fish all the rest of his life.

But, even were he to labor on, unceasingly, till his last gasp, he would fail to satisfy the typical American's idea of business. A Frenchman knows nothing of adventure, of risks, of sport in business. He calculates, and always upon fixed terms, avoiding any trust in improved luck or additional "hustle." Where an American, confronted with the prospect of an as yet non-existent new-comer, would lay plans for enlarging his income, a Frenchman in the same situation will consider how to cut down expenses.

Oh, I am not saying that there is no Bourse in France and no gambling, no race track, and no *loterie,* no speculation (too often directed toward South America) or no desire to "get rich quick" by "putting up a façade" and making the most of *le bluff!* I am only saying that such pranks are rare, and that your typical Frenchman expects to go on, year after year, with practically an unaltered income. Hence the neces-

sity for "making economies." Hence, also, the very curious system by which economies are often made.

You will hear of the kind of Frenchman who carefully maps out his life, with a view to providing dowries for his children and to retiring at fifty, and allots a definite appropriation for every detail of his existence. That Frenchman will read *Le Petit Parisien* at a *sou* instead of *Le Figaro* at two sous. He will sit on a green bench in the park rather than pay a copper for the right to sit in a chair. He will climb to the *impériale,* thus saving the additional sou it would have cost him to ride inside the bus. For *déjeuner,* he will pick out some *établissement Duval* or some *prix fixe* café where the price at which they "unstarve" you is plainly printed on the awning, and in no alarming figures, either. As for the theater, he would rather perish than purchase a *bon fauteuil d'orchestre.* And so it goes—a little saved here and a little saved there, on the theory that *chaque petit peu* added to what he's got makes just a *petit peu* more.

And still they call Frenchmen sentimental! If sentimentalism means being run away with by one's feelings, then we are the sentimental race and the French the prosaic, hard-headed,

practical race, and the proof is precisely this treatment of money—so cool, so calculating, with the French; so recklessly impulsive, with us. I once asked a Frenchman what was the thing that impressed him most in America. "Your inability to spend money," said he. "You don't spend it, you waste it."

But is there not something tremendously sentimental in the motive back of a Frenchman's carefulness in money matters? Is it not, after all, quite supremely romantic to scrimp and save and calculate in order to provide dowries for one's children?

Perhaps. And yet it seems to me incomparably more sentimental to assume that the young things can choose their own mates, somewhere along in the early twenties, and, with little or no assistance from their parents, pitch in at once to paddle their own canoe. How gaily we go on believing in this idyllic arrangement, though by no means unaware that the chief cause for the great and growing epidemic of divorces is the kind of quarrel that begins with difficulties over dollars and cents!

Now, it takes rather less than half an eye to observe that the marriage a French father economizes so patiently to finance gives every evidence of being happy—even sentimentally,

romantically happy—despite the deliberate practicality with which the marriage is arranged. If bride and groom are thrust upon each other (and it amounts to that), they are at least abundantly financed, so that it will be a long time before they can squabble over *francs* and *sous* and most likely they never will.

To all outward appearance, nothing could be less poetic than the sort of union one commonly observes in France; for instance, when one enters a little shop and finds Monsieur and Madame in charge. They are partners, literally. They were set up in business by their parents. Each family put in half the capital and—may I not add?—half the brains. For young Madame has every whit as good a head as young Monsieur. Indeed, she may well be the better man of the two, since she was getting her business training while Monsieur was fooling away his time making the inevitable *service militaire.* Whenever a problem arises, Monsieur consults Madame and defers to her judgment. They are inseparable, those two. They work together, play together, have common interests and common friends, and, so far as you can see, every reason for happiness except the reason we value most—free choice at the outset.

Well, compare the two systems, theirs and

ours. In the long run, it is ours that tends to kill sentiment, theirs that tends to nurture sentiment. For one wrecked home in France, there are a dozen in America.

All in all, then, it little matters if we frown upon French matchmaking, for, in France at least, the plan works admirably; and what we set out to prove was not this, in the first place; it was the French theory regarding children. When a French father sets out to provide for his own retirement from business and at the same time to finance the marriages of his children, it is clear that, the more numerous the children, the smaller will be their several dowries and, consequently, the more difficult the matchmaking and the less secure the financial prospects which, in a majority of cases, are the principal guaranty of happiness.

Now, loving his children as dearly as he does, a French father becomes morbidly cautious regarding whatever affects their interest, and this explains the seemingly paradoxical French epigram, "We refuse to have children because we love them so."

I can understand the French attitude perfectly, and, to a certain extent, I can sympathize and even approve; but it still seems to me a weakness. French parents love their children

very, very much too dearly. They spoil them. It is not good for Bébé to be King of Paris. It is not good for small urchins to be tagged about eternally by hordes of enslaved worshipers. It is especially bad for boys—so exceedingly bad, in fact, that you hear excuses for it. People call it a result of the Franco-Prussian War. When a hundred battlefields had been strewn with young Frenchmen, the mother of a live boy became monstrously proud, so rare he was, and did all in her power to flatter and coddle and pamper him. This continues. Perhaps it accounts for—but, *mon Dieu,* have we not full as many young irrepressibles of our own, over here in America?

Moreover, I think the French father takes half the enjoyment out of life by declining to fling down the glove to Dame Fortune, and add to his family with reasonable audacity, and make up for increased expenses by increasing his income. This shrinking from hazards leads to an easy-going sort of comfort, to be sure, but where does the sport come in?

Sometimes I almost suspect that the timid systematization of existence in France is one cause of the French craze for lotteries (under government supervision, not infrequently) and for race-track betting and for games of chance

—*rouge-et-noire, les petits chevaux,* and the rest, to say nothing of that far more reckless amusement, investing in Venezuelan securities. The gambling instinct demands some sort of satisfaction, and if you deny it the normal sort—by which I mean the running of risks in the ordinary affairs of life—it will find some abnormal satisfaction.

I imagine, too, that the young folks themselves would be as well off, if not better, with a smaller dowry or with none at all, though I have never yet managed to make a Frenchman admit it, such is the extreme conservatism of the race we are accustomed to call volatile. As the saying goes, "France is still sleeping in Napoleon's bed." As the saying ought more properly to go, "France is still ruled by Julius Cæsar." In France, where everything appears to change, few things do.

*Eh, bien!* There are hopeful signs, for all that. France has already discovered that tainted milk kills babies; indeed, France is beginning to recognize that the fly, far from being a useful scavenger, is a carrier of disease; and thus, little by little, France tends to become a country where babies have a fair chance of growing up. Besides, it is an outrageous mistake to assume that race-suicide is common to

all classes in the France of to-day. It was somewhere in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, I suppose, that M. Abel Faivre found the *grande dame* who remarked, "Monsieur, my husband asked me to choose between a baby and a dog. Naturally, I did not hesitate."

Meanwhile, however, we hear of cruel, cruel landlords in revolt against tenants who have children, and what did I see, one Sunday afternoon in the Place des Invalides? A thousand people, in open-air conclave assembled. A brass band. Flags. Orators. On a huge placard, borne proudly aloft, this inscription: "League of the Families Numberous."

## CHAPTER X

### *La Gloire*

TO watch a Frenchman saving, scrimping, and counting every sou, you might think the *brave homme* deplorably materialistic, even allowing for the motives that prompt his economies. And yet, when you look about you for the accumulated evidences of materialism, in France, how very little wealth there seems to be, or rather, how very, very few millionaires—that is, in our sense, for the French call a man a millionaire if he owns a million francs!

On the other hand, all manner of agreeable indications unite to show that, despite some fairly trivial evidences of materialism, your Frenchman is an idealist at heart. A Frenchman—any Frenchman, almost—has either a romantic leaning toward religion or an enthusiastic faith-in-no-faith that makes a religion of in-

fidelity. Moreover, he is passionately devoted to his country. It is hard necessity, never the dream of sordid success, that persuades Frenchmen to leave France in those exceedingly rare instances where they seem to have forgotten their loyalty to *la patrie.* True, France sends numerous emigrants to South America, but *ces messieurs* are natives of Corsica or of the barren, inhospitable *Landes,* and desert their homes simply and solely because they are forced to by sheer misery.

Indeed, a certain vague idealism underlies what the outsider generally regards as the least forgivable of French failings. Once, when I had published a very crude and ill-judged paragraph about the licentiousness of Frenchmen, there came a letter from Mlle. Yvette Guilbert rebuking me—or at least correcting. She admitted, frankly enough, that Frenchmen were not noted for constancy, but she argued that the fault was attributable, really, to something decidedly different from grossness. She said Frenchmen were dreamers, pursuing their ideal, always fancying they had found it, always discovering their failure and renewing the quest. Silly they might be; unprincipled, even; but wicked, essentially—oh, *jamais de la vie!*

On the whole, I am rather inclined to agree

with the charming little *diseuse,* just as I am inclined to agree with those who emphasize the romanticism of the French at other points also. Sometimes, I go the length of applying to the French a remark I once heard Mr. James B. Connolly make about the Irish. "They are spiritual—by which I mean indifferent to materialistic considerations. Tell an Irishman he can amass a million dollars, and he is not interested. Tell him that, if he is everlastingly faithful, he can one day lead a cavalry charge, and you set his very soul ablaze."

They are awfully alike, the Irish and the French. It is a French trait in an Irishman to want to be a policeman. For, as a brilliant Irishman explained it to me, not long ago, the temptation is not the pay, it is not the work, it is the uniform and the power and the being called "Mr. Officer."

All the which observations make a frightfully long introduction (*je vous en prie pardon!*) and yet I think they help toward a comprehension of that enormously potent force in French life, the thing called *"la gloire"*—glory! For *la gloire,* any Frenchman will gladly die. To have honor, a title, fame—oh, the bliss!

This passionate yearning for *la gloire* is cultivated in French infants along with teeth and

hair, and in French children it is cultivated still more assiduously. For instance, by the use of ribbons and crosses in school, where each class has a cross, and the boy or girl at the head of the class all last week has the right to wear the cross all this week—not in the schoolroom, merely, but at home and about the streets. For nobody in France thinks of teaching a child not to show off. In fact, I doubt if anybody could. A French child jumps at the chance, instinctively. When I ask a little Jean to speak a piece, it is wonderful to see how little Yvonne and little Joseph and little Amélie squirm and fidget while waiting their turns to hold forth. It looks dark indeed for little Jean, you would say. A trifle more, and the others would pounce upon little Jean, and silence him in the interest of their own raging passion for *la gloire.*

At college, too, *la gloire* becomes a tremendous impelling force. If athletics had any recognized place in French university life, I am afraid that *la gloire* would play the very mischief with the sciences; and it plays mischief enough with them already by furnishing a motive for the amorous escapades that elicit admiration among French students; but let me not give the impression that even *la gloire* en-

ables dissipation to become more than an incident and an exception. As a rule, French students "grind"—much too diligently, I am inclined to think; and, while the system of competitive examinations, with the promise of positions and advancement for those who succeed, furnishes a tremendous incentive toward grinding, I believe that the glory of success furnishes an incentive still more powerful.

And after college—indeed, all through a man's life—what a struggle for honors! Frenchmen are not content with making money or gaining professional distinction or holding high office. They want ribbons to wear. They want rosettes for their buttonholes. If especially ambitious, they want the cross and grand cordon of the Légion d'Honneur. They want titles and degrees, and, once gained, they fairly brandish them. A man has all his claims to distinction engraved on his calling card. Some afternoon, when you happen to be passing one of the innumerable little printing-shops in a French city, stop and examine the exhibit of sample calling cards outside the door. You will read, "Monsieur Ernest-Robert-Philippe Lemaire, Former Coroner," "Monsieur Marcel-Pierre-Paul-Yves Guizot, Seventh Assistant Gas Inspector," or pos-

sibly, "Monsieur Charles-Edward-Victor-Alfred-Vincent Duchesne, Ex-Policeman." And as for the ribbons and rosettes and all that, people grab for them shamelessly. They go to the Cabinet Officer who serves as chief-ribbon-clerk, and tell him how eminent they are, and demand badges to match their genius and virtues.

Shocking—from our point of view! But temperaments differ. We avoid gesticulation, hesitate to kiss in public, are ashamed to weep, and hide our good points almost as carefully as we hide our bad points; it is what comes of leading an indoor life, where concealment is easy. The French, being an outdoor people, lose not only the sensitiveness we value for ourselves, but also every semblance of false modesty.

To test the difference (amusingly, by the way) try popping your kodak at the passers-by in an American street, and then, later on, in a French street. You know perfectly well that—secretly, at least—every American loves to be photographed. Yet how annoyed your victims look! Quite as if they hated it! Not so the Frenchmen; I have even known Frenchmen to step out into the sunshine before me and smile and attitudinize, the minute I prepared to take a picture.

For sake of fairness, however, we must recognize that a great many of our American short cuts to glory are denied a Frenchman. In France, a shop-keeper is not expected to have his name painted in gigantic letters on a plank fifty feet long and nailed up across the front of his shop. Instead, he hangs out a poetically imaginative shingle, such as "The Springtime," "The Happiness of the Dames," or "The Gain Little," or perhaps christens his establishment for some neighboring landmark and announces "The Liquor Store of the Senate," or "The Milkery of the Holy Ghost," or, if given to realism, he may even call his place the "100,000 Chemises."

Neither is it customary in France for manufacturers to post up their portraits on walls and fences or contribute them to the newspapers. For that matter, it is not only the advertisers who fail to find themselves pictured in the French newspapers. Practically the entire population is denied the honor, just as, in America, practically the entire population has the honor thrust upon it—for refereeing the Hoot-Owls' cakewalk, for tumbling down half a flight of stairs, for ushering at the Orchids' reunion, for stealing four dollars, for being the most popular postman, for winning the hop-

step-and-jump—in short, for anything and everything, so that sooner or later every individual has been half-toned, profile and full-faced and three-quarter, to the inexpressible amusement of the sojourning Frenchman, who thinks us positively the vainest race on earth.

Furthermore, it astonishes the French sojourner to learn that the title of Grand Worthy Patriarch has been conferred upon James G. Smith (groceries and provisions) by the Mystic Temple of the Knights of Nineveh, and that, henceforth, James G. Smith is qualified to wear pink trousers, a yellow swallowtail, a tin helmet, and a cutlass when he rides behind the band. In France, there exists no such royal road to glory as this.

Now, when a nation undertakes to pull through without Grand Worthy Patriarchs in pink trousers and without photographs of the entire population in its newspapers and without the names of its citizens painted in gigantic letters on planks fifty feet long, it is inevitable that such deficiencies should be made up for, somehow.

And so they are—in a measure—though not by any means sufficiently to content the French people. Not satisfied with the annual shower of ribbons and rosettes and enchanted knic-

knacs ("decorations of the Day of the Year") or with those bestowed (with kisses) for brilliant behavior during the army maneuvers or granted for some startling performance in the realm of art or literature or science or aviation or on the battlefield, these insatiable souls demand another Paris Exposition, with its cloudburst of diplomas and medals.

Strange! For already you hear it said in France that the way to be distinguished is to have no medal, no rosette, no ribbon, and this seems true enough if you keep an eye on the lapels of coats as the crowds go by you in the streets. Here is purple ribbon, for scholastic honors; green (*mérite agricole*) for raising tailless sheep or enormous rectangular hogs; and red ribbon, for some towering success that has won its hero admission to the Légion d'Honneur—success in poetry, it may be, or in statesmanship, or, to take the case of M. Marguéry, in contriving the best of sauces for the best of fishes.

Do you smile when you hear that the French government will rain honors upon a mere *restaurateur?* Then certainly you have never tasted *sole Marguéry.* Indeed, I almost suspect that you have never subsisted upon French cooking, or you would be prepared to admit,

fairly cordially, that the greatest man in France is the *chef*. At once an artist, a poet, and a savant, he is a national asset, even from the pecuniary point of view, since it is largely for the delights of French cooking that hosts of foreigners consent to live in France and spend liberally while there. For my own part, I cannot too heartily applaud the government's recognition of his genius.

Now, in a land where restaurateurs receive official honors, practically every young fellow may aspire to *la gloire,* as why should he not? Even the cub reporter on the dowdiest penny paper does, well knowing that, with a reasonable amount of talent and an absolutely unreasonable amount of industry, he may win an "armchair" among the Forty Immortals of the Académie Française.

There is a lot of joking in France at the expense of that "illustrious company." Frenchmen poke fun at the Academic sanctimony and at the Academic swagger and especially at the Academic fancy dress—the swallowtail coat bordered with green "palms," the green palms down the side-seams of the trousers and adorning the *bicorne* hat, and, still more astonishing, the mother-of-pearl sword. Moreover, you suspect that the humor of all this is appreciated by

the Academicians themselves, for they are not above enjoying a joke or perpetrating one. When they assemble "beneath the cupola" of the Palais Mazarin (Institut de France) to "receive" a new Immortal, the address of welcome "guys" him without mercy. And yet, despite the ridicule, it is a glorious triumph to be made a member of the fancy-dress brotherhood.

There are other Academies—in fact, four others connected with this self-same Institut—but not one of the rest confers such advantages. Everywhere in France the papers print biographies of the newly-elected Immortal, along with his portrait and *critiques* of his works. His publisher presents him in a uniform edition. Editors besiege him, offering fabulous space rates for anything to which he will append his signature and the magic formula "de l'Académie Française." And socially, he becomes a lion, not to say a raging, jumping demigod.

Just what return he makes for all this, is perhaps problematical. Many a Frenchman (before his election to the "glorious company") protests that the Immortals do positive mischief—that they side with the Royalists and the old *noblesse,* and make common cause with the Catholics, and suppress originality by holding to the most conventionalized standards of taste.

As for their official duty, the making of a Dictionary, why, in the first place, they have not made it, and, still worse, they are a "high-brow" organization, much too priggish for the job—or at least, so Philistines assert.

Personally, I think the Immortals should be forgiven. They seem to me to exhibit a natural reaction after the awful, awful, literary shockers by which, as a rule, they have won their fame. After sowing their wild oats, they are entitled to their love of respectability, though it does appear odd, perhaps, that they should be the chosen arbiters and requiters of virtue.

A little before Christmas, every year, the Academicians gather to award *prix de vertu* —sums of money accruing from various funds left, from time to time, to provide rewards for goodness. In the main, the prizes go to peasants and servants and to charitable organizations—not by any means an arrangement harmonious with the Academy's pretensions.

For this very reason, a *prix de vertu* is held in greater esteem by its humble and hitherto obscure recipient, especially as the award is entirely unexpected. A little lace-maker in some lost village of La Vendée toils forty years to support a blind father and an insane mother; a crippled girl in the Cevennes not only cares

for her four orphaned brothers and sisters but adopts three others; a fisherman on the Breton shore risks his life repeatedly and rescues eleven persons from drowning; a servant girl, dismissed because her employer is bankrupt, stays on without wages, sacrifices her savings, and helps the family win its way back to a competency. Such cases, observed by the neighbors, prompt the same impulse always. "Ah!" say they. "Let us write to the Académie Française."

In the course of a year, thousands of letters pour in—some illiterate, some illegible, but every one glowing with tenderness and affectionate admiration for the heroic soul it praises. What documents! How they lay bare the very best there is in the heart of living France! No matter how supercilious the learned Immortals who peruse these letters, the effect is infinitely touching, and when the chairman of the committee makes his report, it is with a degree of feeling rarely displayed when officialdom announces the "decorations of the Day of the Year." For it comes as a surprise, each time, this recognition of the native aristocracy of cottage and kitchen.

But while *la gloire* is a recompense toiled for and earned, as a rule, it is sometimes an affair

of birth; for republican France has still its titled aristocracy, and it is not only the English who "dearly love a lord." To Monsieur le Duc and Monsieur le Baron and Madame la Comtesse, France kotows with something of reverence, though there would be a lot more bowing and scraping if France were surer of the source of their titles. Are they really so ancient? Who knows but they may be mere Napoleonic trumpery or rank conferred by the restored Bourbons or, possibly, the Pope? I never troubled to look into the facts of the case, but I have heard Frenchmen say that a certain particularly interesting French duke is in reality a Yankee who presented a fortune to the Church of Rome.

Now, this margin of doubt tends to discourage flunkeyism, and so does the enforced modesty of the genuine nobility. Some of them retain their *châteaux,* it is true, and marvelous combinations of castle and country-house they are. But the life within lacks much of its old-time gaiety and splendor, as part of the pose required of the *noblesse* under a republic is an assumption of injured excellence—a sort of substitute for half-mourning. Especially in Paris. There the ancestried aristocrats live in something very like retirement. Again and again, you might pass

by their mansions in the Faubourg Saint-Germain without suspecting what effulgent titles adorn the folk within.

Moreover, even those who by nature "dearly love a lord" must feel a fairly pronounced, albeit secret, dread of the ideas these lords of old France profess. They are Royalists, one and all, since nothing short of a restoration of the Monarchy or the Empire can ever give them back their ancient honors at court and before the nation.

Well, they are at all events not the only Royalists in France. When some sovereign from abroad rides down the Champs-Élysées beside the President of the Republic, there is anything but the republican spirit of "liberty, equality, fraternity" in those cries of "Vive le roi!" If I mistake not, there are remnants of the perfectly selfish and unscrupulous devotion to a royalist régime for the mere sake of its distribution of *la gloire*. Bring back either the Bourbons or the Bonapartes, and anybody clever at wire-pulling will be sure of a title.

As if, forsooth, the dodging of *la gloire* were not already an art beyond the skill of the ordinary human being and some animals. One day, in a French city, I saw a huge St. Bernard

dog wearing a blanket and on the blanket a ribbon and a medal precisely like those old soldiers pin on their coats.

My first sensation was amusement. Then I became curious and asked my French friends what it meant. Accounts differed. Some said the animal had belonged to a rescue corps, somewhere in the French Alps. Others said he was an army dog. But all agreed that he had been decorated by the French government for saving a life.

At that, there came a lump in my throat, and I thought what a splendid thing it was, this reaching out across the vast gulf fixed by species and bestowing his share of *la gloire* upon a four-footed hero.

As I write, I wonder a little if you share my feeling—it is so hard, here in America, to take sentiment seriously, whereas in France they can even have a dog cemetery at Asnières, with its miniature tombs and their mournful epitaphs, and you can visit the place and not feel much sense of incongruity. On the whole, it belongs with other perfectly natural demonstrations of French sentiment—the sentiment, for instance, that threw a mourning veil over Rodin's statue of "The Thinker" at the time of Berthelot's

funeral and has kept the Strasbourg monument in the Place de la Concorde always loaded with mourning wreaths.

For my own part, I like the French custom of bestowing decorations, and should defend it if only because it brings joy unutterable to many a poor soul on his death-bed. Suppose, for example, one of those all too frequent disasters in a French coal mine; suppose a man going back into the horror again and again to save life and at last being dragged out mutilated and all but dead. Then, oh, the consolation when an emissary from the French government comes riding post-haste to bring, not the mere ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur and not the red rosette, either, but the glorious cross itself!

I have a good deal less admiration, however, for a certain other form of *la gloire*—the entirely unofficial distinction practically any young upstart can go in for by picking a quarrel, precipitating a challenge, and fighting a duel.

I know, of course, that in America a French duel is regarded as quite the most reliable of all safety-devices, and I rejoice to say that it frequently is, for sometimes the quarrel seems hardly to warrant blood-shed. Take the case of the wonderful Jeanne d'Arc duel fought several years ago by MM. Jaurès and Déroulède.

A French historian had pitched into Jeanne, saying she was no better than a saint ought of rights to be, and M. Jaurès had taken sides with the historian when the affair came up for discussion in the Chamber of Deputies. Thereupon, M. Déroulède challenged M. Jaurès to fight.

Now, as Déroulède was in exile in Spain for an attempt to overthrow the Republic, it seemed that the duel would scarcely eventuate, and it never could have eventuated had not the French government issued a special dispensation giving the exile permission to cross the frontier into France and remain there long enough to settle his difference about Jeanne with M. Jaurès. Singular, this—especially when you stop to consider that French law forbids duelling!

As was expected, the encounter led to the usual "exchange of two balls without result," but of late the duels have become ever so much more spirited, owing to the immense publicity that attends them.

Theoretically, they are secret affairs, involving only the principals, the seconds, and the doctor. When the spot chosen is a garden, spectators are (theoretically) ruled out, as a French garden has a high stone wall around it, and it is a crime in France to construct windows

commanding a view of one's neighbor's garden. Yes, yes, but what is to prevent people's looking under gates? What is to prevent their swarming on neighboring roofs?

This puts the combatants on their mettle, and if it is a fight with sabers, they slice one another to some purpose. For in these days, it is not only the spectators who are looking on; it is all France—through the lens of the cinematograph.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Sociability*

WHEN you have said that the love of children and the passion for *la gloire* are two of the dominant impulses in a Frenchman's heart, there remains still another—the craving for sociability. Doom a Frenchman to solitude and silence, and the name for his Gehenna is Devil's Island.

There are Germans who talk when they feel like it. There are Englishmen whom no power on earth can force to talk. But I have yet to discover the Frenchman whom anything short of complete isolation could restrain from talking. I remember in particular an irrepressible Monsieur, aboard a steamer, who talked French (an infernal Midi French) from morning till night though perfectly aware that nobody understood him.

And quite similar was an experience connected with our first introduction to living France.

We had gone ashore at Algiers—now a mod-

ern French city (with façades wonderfully like those in the Rue de Rivoli) enclosing an ancient Arab city (with mosques and veiled ladies and Oriental bazaars)—and we were sitting at dinner in a charming French hotel. At the next table was a magnificent, big, rosy, blond-mustachioed fellow who invented an opportunity of drawing us into conversation. We told him, brokenly, that our French was the college sort, merely. We said we could read, but not speak. We begged ten thousand pardons, but assured him that, to our profound regret, we could not understand one single word he was saying, and our obvious confusion and embarrassment must have made it only too evident without our confession. Yet the fellow kept blandly on—smiling, nodding, gesticulating and talking, talking, talking, all through the dinner.

When he had gone, we asked our *garçon* who the stranger was, and learned that he had command of an army post, back in the desert—a most lonely place—and, once every month, came up to Algiers to let loose the compressed conversation that had accumulated inside him. Otherwise, he would certainly have burst.

These were eloquent incidents (and eloquent Frenchmen), but I think them quite representative, and there are even times when I come near

accepting Thackeray's assertion that the French zest for talk is the foundation of French profligacy. How cleverly he pictures Madame's lover hanging over the back of Madame's chair and joining her in an eternal duet of *spirituelle* and ethereal "chin-music"! This may be faulty psychology, I suppose, but what capital satire!

The truth is, hardly any wild extravagance of phrasing can overstate the French determination to get together and talk, nor can one easily overestimate its results, chief of which is the omnipresent café.

Nothing so astonishes an American as the profusion of cafés in France—six to the block, it seems, and all of them overflowing upon the sidewalk—but perhaps an American ought to be even more astonished when he realizes the forces that drive sociability to maintain this very curious institution. For the American hears it said that "in France there are no friends"—meaning that the jolly, intimate comradeship between man and man, as it exists in America, is a thing Frenchmen know nothing about. Instead, they content themselves with the loquacious hilarities of the café—that is, when they step outside their homes at all.

This the *père de famille* rarely does, for in

France the sphere of man is in the home. The *cercle* (French for club) has only the slenderest and most precarious existence. When M. Tardieu was being entertained in one of our American cities, he was taken to luncheon at a club and found himself surrounded by middle-aged gentlemen, more than half of whom seemed to be fathers of families. Naturally, he inferred that they lived in the suburbs, and great was his bewilderment on hearing that the majority had fine houses close by and were deliberately avoiding their family tables—yes, and making a virtue of it—calling it a public-spirited loyalty to that heavenly institution, the club.

Equally excited, I imagine, would have been M. Tardieu's surprise had he seen the middle-class American husband deserting his fireside for the "lodge." They have Masons in France—a few, supposed by the average Frenchman to be paragons of devilish wickedness—but I never met one. And as for other social organizations, I know only a single example, and that is "the Trumpets of the Future," a kind of military alumni association that parades the streets once a year to keep alive the memories of barrack-room acquaintanceships.

Singular discoveries one makes, too, when one inquires about feminine sociability in France.

Every Frenchwoman has "her day," and it is almost a rudeness for a woman to call upon her on any other day. Consequently, she sees her friends six or seven at a time—an arrangement not conducive to the best gossip. Indeed, it is hardly more so than are the formal dinner-parties, the formal receptions, and the formal dances that begin at something like midnight and last till something like breakfast-time.

Now, when you have a country without clubs and practically without lodges or social organizations, and with but few of the impromptu, confidential, rough-and-ready informalities that favor the more spontaneous expressions of sociability, you will have a country most appallingly built up with cafés. For the café supplies exactly the opportunities no other institution in France ever does or ever can. At the café, people get together in twos and in twenties. They are confidential or oratorical as the spirit moves. They behave as they like. They take their pick of half-a-dozen amusements or even transact business. They feel little or no responsibility beyond the natural one of not giving offense. In the café, France relaxes and forgets its *devoirs* and talks, *talks,* TALKS.

But, *mon Dieu,* I must not overlook the danger of being misunderstood when I speak of the

café. I remember only too well the awful evening we piloted an American woman and her daughter through the cafés of the *Quartier Latin* and how tragically disappointed they were. In their innocence, the dear creatures had expected to see soubrettes in short dresses standing on tables and holding up champagne glasses, just as in the musical comedies.

Some such cafés exist, I suppose. In the Paris of Harry Thaw and the Grand Dukes, there are the "Dead Rats" and various other booby-traps, set to catch foreigners. Maxim's is a café. The cafés-chantants are cafés. So are the establishments where hired dancing girls sit in the laps of the male boobies. In a sense, the cabarets are cafés—even those silly, vulgar and incredibly tired-out cabarets, "L'Enfer" and "Ciel." And in a sense, France itself is a café. For almost everything in France includes refreshments. The chicken-show has its bar. "Beefalo Bill" necessitates champagne. When you listen to lovely chamber-music at the Concerts Rouges, it is for the *consommation* that you pay. And all France, at all hours, seems to be either eating or drinking or both.

So, when one speaks of the café, one must be more or less specific and define the term.

Normally and typically, the French café is a

combination of restaurant, saloon, club, hotel lobby, and frisky rendezvous, occupying at least the entire ground-floor of a building and at least half the sidewalk in front of it. Touch your hat-brim as you enter, and again as you go out, in courtesy to your host and fellow-guests. Beyond this ceremony, none other exists. You sit where you choose—on the *banquette,* a cushioned bench against the wall, or in a spindle-legged chair at a spindle-legged table—and order whatever you like. Thenceforth, the house is yours. You can call for playing-cards, checkers, dominoes, a newspaper, the latest comic weeklies, or pen, ink, and stationery. You can stay forever, smoking, chattering, reading, and, incidentally, ordering now and then, a few *sous* at a time, to keep up appearances. There you meet your friends. There, if convenient, you receive your mail. There you talk business or gossip or politics. There you are welcome, every day in the week, the whole year round—you and your family and your wife's relations and theirs also.

Normally and typically, such is the combination of restaurant, saloon, club, hotel-lobby, and rendezvous they call a café, though the type may vary in a good many directions without becoming one of the grotesque and pernicious

abnormalities made familiar to Americans by the musical comedies.

Oftentime, the café diverges from the normal and typical by cutting its prices, dispensing with elegance, and attracting a cheap and uncouth *clientèle* by displaying some such name as the "Cocher Fidéle." Shockingly rough it looks, this "Cocher Fidéle"—so rough that you would prefer to re-christen it the "Cocher Mort." Yet, should you have occasion to depend on that sort of hostelry (I have, several times) you would be delightfully surprised at the excellence of the food and the civility of the service and the company. Beware of the wine, though, and the barbed-wire cognac! Heaven knows what the brandy consists of, but the *vin rouge* brings only too harrowing suggestions of vinegar and red ink.

Or perhaps the café may go in for the joyous and festal, advertising "*salons pour noces*" or providing a concert every afternoon and another in the evening and not by any means a bad concert, either. In France, nothing is easier than to procure good music, for, as France has too many artists, so France has too many musicians—oh, hundreds and hundreds too many, and trained ones at that. I remember a stunning soprano we heard, singing for coppers at

an open-air market in a little French town, and a perfect wonder of a girl going from *terrasse* to *terrasse,* singing to the crowds outside the cafés on a French holiday. So, when it comes to recruiting "artists" for his orchestra indoors, a *cafétier* picks the best from a multitude of applicants and exacts an ambitious program—not by any means the trash our hotel-orchestras play, but selections from symphonies and grand opera. Which would be an exceedingly happy arrangement, were it not for the rather too logical suspicion that "the music comes out of the beer."

Or again, the café sometimes takes still a different tack, and courts the patronage of the dissolute. One I could name seemed quite reverberant with kisses. Another, in the same neighborhood, attracted young rakes, and allowed a lot of frightfully over-painted girls to drift about from table to table scraping acquaintance with them, while downstairs it maintained an "American bar," where you were expected to sit on a tall stool like a book-keeper's and sip *un cocktail* (pronounced "cocked eye") through a straw.

This sort of thing brings the café perilously near the spirit of the "eccentric" and monstrously improper establishments that are cafés

chiefly in name, and happily the tendency is very exceptional. Almost everywhere, the café shows a remarkable tolerance of mischief, but it rarely promotes it, and there are cafés you might visit a score of times without encountering enough Bohemianism to disturb a deacon. You would see family parties, or groups of dignified *rentiers,* or youngsters as free from dangerous friskiness as if they had assembled in an American ice-cream parlor. For that matter, I can show you a café, right in the very center of the artists' quarter, where the favorite beverage is camomile tea.

And, judging by the lack of uproar, you might imagine that camomile tea was the favorite beverage even in the pseudo-German cafés where they advertise "sauerkraut garnished" and "beer of the lion" rushed over from Munich by "big quickness," meaning chain-lightning express. To be sure, they will show you a *Clemenceau,* and a terrifying huge beer-mug it is—much better suited to gold-fish, you would say. Then, for your further astonishment, they will point to the *Fallières,* which is several times bigger than a *Clemenceau* and ought by all means to have life-preservers hung along its edge, with the familiar legend, "Succor to the drowned." And yet, though you stay

till the small hours in a pseudo-German café—the Balzar, for instance—you will rarely see anybody the worse for drink.

One drinks slowly, slowly, in a café, and while most of the guests favor the *bière blonde* or *bière brune* they brew so innocently in France, there are many who take chocolate, instead, or perhaps coffee poured hot into tempered glasses, or even that dreadful, dreadful concoction they call a *grenadine.* Oh, thousand thunders, what sickishness! Imagine an intensely sweet ruby-red sirup, with just a little exceedingly poor soda-water added, and *voilà la grenadine!*

It has one virtue, however. It lasts. A little goes a long, long way. And the great object, at a café, is not drinking; the great object is refraining from drinking, so as to make the fewest possible orders pay for the largest possible amount of hospitality and serve as an excuse for staying on, hour after hour, and talking eternally.

It is sociability, then, and not bibulosity, that serves as the cornerstone of this enormously popular establishment. To a French community, the café is what the "store" is to a Yankee village—or rather, the café is a very great deal more than that. Instead of a mere

cluster of tobacco-chewers around a red-hot stove, it entertains whole families and might almost adopt the motto of our "movies"—"For man, woman, and child."

And yet this most beloved of all French institutions has its foes, even among the French. The Protestants make it a matter of conscience never to be seen in a café. Moreover, you will hear it said that no respectable woman ever is; whereas, well—use your eyes. Undeniably you will observe some less than questionable types —*demimondaines,* out and out, and eager to advertise their disgrace. Probably you will also observe representatives of that other unfortunate class, the *grisettes,* who are supposed no longer to exist and yet do and perhaps always will, no matter by what altered designation they are known. And such patrons are to be noticed, now and then, even in the most dignified of cafés. But whoever says they predominate, save in a few very exceptional places, lies monstrously. And whoever adopts that silly theory, and acts on it, and takes liberties accordingly, will soon enough get some Frenchman's boot-toe under his chin.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Powers That Be*

HAVING gone pretty well over the outside of our Frenchman and burrowed more or less audaciously into his mind and heart, so that we have some understanding of the motives that actuate him, we are arrived at the point where we must ask what are the powers by which living France is kept in order.

In a way, it may seem illogical that this topic should come up so late in our discussion of human nature as it has developed in France. For a consciousness of being governed is one of your very first sensations on setting foot upon French soil. No sooner have the manager, the clerk, the femme-de-chambre, the valet-de-chambre and the porter seen you to your room in your hotel than up comes a blank to be filled out for the police. You must give your name,

your nationality, your profession, your last address, and, for aught I remember, six or seven additional details. Wherever you put up, in France, this ceremony is repeated. It is almost as if you were traveling in Russia.

And let us assume that you will not have been many minutes in France before it occurs to you to procure tobacco for your pipe. Out you go, in search of the tobacconist's sign, a tall red cigar. Sighting one presently, you find a little old lady weighing out snuff—she is always weighing out snuff except when knitting—and, waiting your turn, you demand *un paquet de tabac* (pronounced tahbah)—and receive a cube of—oh, heaven help us, *what?* Oakum? Compressed horse-hair? Goodness knows. But what surprises you still more than the contents is the label—"Fabrications of the State; contributions indirect"—especially as this singular legend appears also on the box of matches you purchase in the hope that possibly the *tabac* can be smoked.

Clever scheme, this of the French Republic's by which the government manufactures tobacco and matches, sells inferior wares at fancy prices, pockets the proceeds, and may be seen "making a long nose" at the would-be tax-dodger. But oh, oh, oh, it is tyrannous! Not

long ago, a certain very popular brand of cigarette ran short, and there went up a wail from the public; whereupon, the government replied that it was over-stocked with a certain less popular brand, which must be consumed before Frenchmen could again obtain the smoke they sighed for.

It looks awfully like tyranny, too—the way they have of protecting the government's monopoly of the salt business. Not that one objects, particularly, to the high price of salt, though that in an ordinary salt-caster costs fifteen cents, they tell me; but it does seem an outrage when, if you are caught carrying a bucket of sea-water away from a French beach, some revenue officer pursues you and asks you what you intend to do with it; as if, forsooth, you were running a salt-works in opposition to the French Republic!

Less oppressive, to be sure, is the government's absorption of the manufacture of Gobelin tapestries and of the potteries at Sèvres, but when the French Republic takes to breaking Frenchmen's necks by operating things called railroads, no wonder the Frenchmen grumble.

Now, I am on the whole a very enthusiastic admirer of the French railroads. I wish we might adopt the compartments they have in

their cars. The arrangement requires half the passengers to ride backward, it is true, and, in cases where no aisle is provided, it involves some dangers; but it prevents a baby's squall from annoying more than a very few people; if dust and smoke come in, they cannot go the whole length of a car, as happens with ours; and the numerous doors allow the cars to be filled or emptied with great rapidity. Moreover, I like the high platforms at stations, so that you hardly ever have to step up in boarding your train, and I like the absence of bells on the engine and the use of only a temperate kind of whistle. And finally, I like the solidity of the road, where the rails are made fast to sunken "chairs," and I like the rule that constructs switches in such a way that a train must go past a switch and then back into it, for this obviates the risk of running into an open switch. But government ownership (with its attendant massacre of passengers) is a scandal I should be sorry to see imported into America.

Take, for instance, the anarchy that has prevailed on the Chemin-de-Fer de l'Ouest since it was purchased by the government and rechristened the Ouest-État. Accidents—*ciel,* what accidents! Nothing like it in all the previous history of the road, they say. And such

confusion! While we were in France this last time, a member of the Chambre des Deputés addressed a question to the *grand seigneur* of the Ouest-État, demanding how many employees he had. The worthy potentate asked time to investigate. After some days, he reported that nobody knew or could by any means find out. Nor was this all. Another enraged deputy compared the current time-table with its predecessors and asked why it took him longer to reach home by the Ouest-État than it did in 1859. What wonder, then, that this outlandish caricature of a railroad became the subject of music-hall skits, where peasants milked cows on the railway track, while drunken men were laid down there for safe-keeping by their loving and careful friends? And what wonder that France shudders at the thought of another railroad's falling under the domination of the French government?

When a government takes to registering tourists, rolling cigarettes, manufacturing matches and salt, weaving tapestries, painting porcelain, and running railroads—to say nothing of posting *octroi* officials at the entrances to every city for the collection of duties on eatables—you will perhaps conclude that in France they have a notion that that government is best which gov-

erns most. Very strange such a theory would be, considering the diligence with which the government has painted "Liberty, equality, fraternity" on all the public buildings, and very strange, too, in the light of that rather startling phenomenon, the freedom of bill-sticking.

Within a very few days after your arrival in France, you are practically sure to encounter a huge hand-bill, reading thus: "Patriots, heroes, Frenchmen! Rise and proclaim your King! The hour has struck. No longer will France tolerate a régime of rapine and fraud and oppression. Down with the brigands! Let Philip of Orleans, your rightful sovereign, ascend the throne of his fathers!"

Or perhaps the proclamation asserts the claims of the Bonapartes and promises to restore the Empire, with all its Napoleonic glories, or, as is barely possible, calls for the recognition of some alleged descendant of the lost Dauphin.

Look close at the handbill, and you will see that it bears a government stamp. In other words, the "patriots" have purchased from the authorities the right to bid France overthrow the republic. For, once you have bought a government stamp and stuck it on, you can print anything you like on the paper and post it on

any wall not marked "Défense d'afficher." During the most trying hours of the crisis over Morocco, Paris was billed with the gigantic posters of a new book, "The Inevitable Conflict. Let us strike Germany To-day!"

Once, and only once, have I seen the police meddle with handbills, and that was when some enthusiast had attacked a politician, posting up his portrait with "Bandit" written across the forehead and with an account of his crimes underneath—crimes such as would not be thought printable by the vilest of our gutter newspapers. In an hour's time, down came the last of these handbills, not because of their indecency, but because they had not been adorned with the government stamp.

And almost equal to the freedom of bill-sticking is the freedom of the press. Every conceivable and inconceivable shade of anti-republican sentiment has its organ, until you might almost regard sedition as a leading French industry. There are Orleanist papers, Bonapartist papers, Socialist papers, even Anarchist papers. In fact, the first function of an Anarchist "group" is to set up a printing-press. So it comes about that a mere cursory glance over the newspapers for sale at any kiosk in any street or avenue of any French

city is enough to make an American's eyes stick out.

Meanwhile, it is enough to show him why French statesmen are always "saving the France." Without eternal vigilance on their part, France might relapse into empire or monarchy at any moment or topple into sheer disorder. The wonder is not that France has witnessed such frequent revolutions. When you stop to reckon up the various political systems France has had and the various political tribes of which living France is composed, the wonder is that the Third Republic has endured without a break ever since 1870. No amount of uproar has been able to overthrow it—not Boulangerism, nor the *Affaire Dreyfus,* nor even the revolt of the Midi wine-growers, which occasioned the wholesale resignations of mayors, and plunged the South of France into temporary anarchy.

What shall we say, then, of this government that is always about to be overthrown and, happily, always being "saved"? What is its organization? How does it work? What is its potency for good or ill in this "pleasant land of France"?

A republic, they call it, and so it is, but it involves monarchical inheritance that betrays it-

self most frankly in the functions of the French President, who is not a president, but a king—while he lasts, at least, and he lasts for seven years.

Elected at Versailles by a special joint-session of the Senate and the Deputies, he has but one important prerogative—that of appointing the Premier; and even this appointment of the Premier lacks force until it has been ratified by the Parliament.

Nominally, the President has the right to withhold his signature from bills that have passed the Chamber and the Senate; in practise, he signs everything, and is, to put it bluntly, a mere ornamental figure, personifying the State and representing the more or less permanent factor in a series of governments. In short, he is a king, though they say a French president once remarked, "As for myself, what am I? A Queen Victoria."

Now, of course, a Queen Victoria may wield enormous influence, and of course a gifted and vigorous and politically astute French president may do much toward shaping the policy of the French government—rather more, on the whole, than a gifted and vigorous and politically astute editor or magazine-writer might; and yet the President's ornamental character

remains his fundamentally essential character for all that.

He is to live in splendor in the Élysées Palace, he is to spend an enormous salary, he is to open the Salon, review the army, dedicate the Dog Show, smile benignly upon prize pigs. On New Year's Day he is to visit the Parliament and hold a gorgeous reception *chez lui.* When foreign sovereigns come to Paris, the President is to do the honors, extending the hospitality of France to—well, every imaginable kind of monarch, from the King of England to the King of Cambodia.

It is on these oft-recurring occasions that living France beholds its President. Everywhere in Paris, the flags of two nations flutter side by side. There are flowers everywhere, decorations everywhere, crowds everywhere. At the little railway station in the Bois de Boulogne, a gold-fringed canopy of crimson velvet is upheld on gold-tipped spears. From there, all the way down the Champs-Élysées and through the Place de la Concorde and across the bridge and along the *quai* to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the route is hedged with troops—two continuous files of them, standing shoulder to shoulder at the curb—

while at strategic points superbly mounted cavalrymen (dragoons and *cuirassiers*) are massed in awesome squadrons.

We hear a booming of cannon and a military band playing the "Marseillaise." His majesty has arrived. Presently, down the Champs-Élysées comes the State cortége. First, a galloping mass of cavalry, then the open coach of the Police Commissioner with mounted attendants, then more horsemen, then the Presidential scouts and *piqueurs*, and, finally, surrounded by a dazzling troop of *cuirassiers*, the Presidential carriage, with its four prancing horses and its glittering out-riders. In a storm of blinding beauty, the procession thunders past. It seems a torrent of gleaming breastplates; steel helmets with brass crests and with flying plumes a yard long; bannerets streaming from the tips of lances; the blue of coatsleeves, the red of army breeches; the rhythmic plunge of incomparable horses; and, inside it all, two familiar figures. One, in full uniform, is His Majesty from abroad. The other, in "habit black" and *chapeau* "high of form with eight reflections," is Monsieur le Président de la République. Both are bowing and smiling. At risk of tumbling off the chairs we stand on, we lean forward

excitedly, swing our hats in the air, and shout at the top of our lungs, "Vive le roi!" or "Vive la France!" or "Vive l'armée!"

After escorting the nation's guest to his apartments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the President returns to the Élysées Palace, where, almost immediately, he is called upon by the nation's guest, and thus begins a three days' program of jollifications—visits to the "monuments" of Paris, a rabbit hunt at Rambouillet, a reception at the Hotel-de-Ville, a gala night at the Opera, and possibly an informal little affair of bomb-throwing.

Later on, when France feels it proper to reciprocate, it is the President of the Republic who goes abroad to return the visit of the foreign potentate. And oh, the grandeur of his going! He departs in the sumptuous Presidential train that is kept in readiness not only for his journeys to the frontier, but for his much more frequent excursions through his own dominions—to open an exposition, to lay a cornerstone, to review his troops, to inspect this, that, and the other, and bow and smile and say the gracious thing and pinch the little, pointed chins of innumerable little French children.

Meanwhile, the real executive—the President in our American acceptance of the word—is the

Premier. He corresponds to the British Prime Minister. As head of the Cabinet, he holds supreme power so long as he can avoid a clash with the Parliament. The moment a clash occurs, out he goes, and the whole cabinet along with him. It is the *chute* of the *ministère.*

Thus an admirable flexibility prevails in matters governmental, so that whenever a change in popular sentiment is reflected in the people's parliament, then, instantly, a new executive comes to power as typifying the changed sentiment and determined to obey it. The spectacle of an administration radically at variance with the people's will is therefore the next thing to impossible in France. If you can imagine a French Taft, you must also imagine a Taft resigning his office when he discovered, a few months after his inauguration, that he had lost the confidence of his people.

I sometimes think that this responsiveness of the government to the people's will is what gives citizenship so much dignity in France, though there are other reasons, and perhaps the customs surrounding elections have quite as much to do with it. A Frenchman is not asked to deposit his ballot in a saloon or a schoolhouse or a portable shed. The ballot is not a mere list of un-annotated names, unknown

to him, in the main, and apparently offering a small choice of rotten apples. And the candidates, once elected, are not the silent, undemonstrative machines we too often meet with—or rather, fail to meet with, because of their aloofness.

When a Frenchman votes, it is in the *mairie* of his *arrondissement*—or the *hotel-de-ville* of his city. Up the marble stairs he goes and through a corridor embellished with statuary and mural paintings, and deposits his ballot in the traditional urn.

Moreover, it is a comprehensible ballot. At the door or in the street, he sees men with party labels on their hats distributing their lists of candidates. Next each candidate's name he reads his address, which explains much, and his occupation which explains more. According to his opinions, he picks his man—a retired army officer, a plumber, a professor, a dentist, or a baron living on his *rentes*—and is more or less influenced by his reflections upon the sort of establishment the man keeps up—i.e., whether he lives in the Rue Conspuez or the Avenue de l'Ancien Régime. And when the returns are all in, it seems to the voter only right that the successful candidates should post up proclama-

tions of thanks, together with promises to behave.

Considering the dignity, not to say the elegance, that attends an election in France, you will naturally inquire if there are not a great many French women who aspire to vote. Certainly it would seem natural that they should, especially when one recalls how often women have been the guiding stars of French statesmen and how eagerly the women of present-day France seem to crave admission to masculine callings—everything, almost, from the law and medicine to cab-driving, bill-sticking, and the distributing of "prospectuses"—to say nothing of their delight in all sorts of sports that enable them to wear knickers or even the awfully abbreviated one-piece bathing suit.

Naturally, there does exist a Woman's Suffrage campaign in France and a willingness, on certain good ladies' part, to ride around in carriages with "La Femme Doit Voter" on placards held bravely aloft. Besides, it appears that quite a majority of representative Frenchmen favor votes for women. At least, such was the upshot of a symposium arranged several years ago by *La Revue.*

Well, who knows but this is why so very, very

few French women care a *sou* for the vote? Undoubtedly it explains the extreme caution exercised by the French Suffragists. Without the stimulus of opposition, they lack fury, and, confronted by an amiable indifference, their fear is lest some blunder of theirs may make the cause ridiculous and "end it with a song."

So the occasional wild rumpuses that lend picturesqueness to French life are brought to pass not by women who demand a share in the activities of the Republic, but by men who would abolish the activities of the Republic outright—such disturbers, for instance, as the "Camelots du Roi" and sundry other Royalists.

It is easy to laugh at the Royalists, so chimerical is their dream of reinstating the Bourbon line in France, and so numerous (and sometimes so painfully obscure) are the Pretenders to the French throne. It is even easy to condemn them. Are not their motives selfish? Do they not demand a rehabilitated monarchy in order to obtain places of distinction at a rehabilitated French court?

Nevertheless, I have heard very sensible and peaceable and disinterested Frenchmen remark upon the outrageous cost of living under a republic. They point to the neighboring Kingdom of Belgium, where living is cheap. They look

back to the comfortable, easy-going days of monarchy in France. They are convinced that a king or an emperor, with all his train, would be a money-saving device in the France of to-day.

At first glance, such assertions will probably seem as shallow as they are paradoxical, but there is truth oftentimes in paradox and I hardly think the critics of the republican régime as hasty or illogical as they may appear. For I have seen the innumerable hordes of clerks, accountants, copyists, flunkeys, door-openers, door-shutters, office-cats, rubber-stamps, chair-warmers, and petty drudges the Republic manages to support in return for votes. No wonder there are Frenchmen who ask if it would not be cheaper to maintain one family in dazzling glory than such countless multitudes in dowdiness.

So extensive is this plague, indeed, that actually it accounts for the superabundance of oratory among parliamentarians. For, in France, eloquence is a Southern trait; and the South of France, being poor, grabs at government clerkships. From this it results that a Southerner ambitious for political advancement can always gain the support of other natives of the South. They give him a seat in the

Chamber; he gives them jobs. By hundreds—I had almost said by thousands—they become *fonctionnaires.* It is the feudal system. To a degree, it is the Tammany system. *Ah, messieurs, voilà le graft!*

Graft with a difference, however. Too honest to pad their payrolls with the dead, the as-yet-unborn, the imaginary, or the same man over and over again under different names, French politicians pad them with the living. This continues till the great cry in France is not against the burden of the army, but against the burden of the *fonctionnaires.*

Most Frenchmen will tell you the functionaries lead an indolent life, gnawing their finger-nails or perhaps fishing, but whenever I saw them I considered that they were doing rather more than a fair day's work. I had no fault to find with them. The fault I found was with the work—four-fifths of it needless—they were set to do.

Graft again; unnecessary labor invented in order to employ unnecessary men; at all points a deliberately involved and befuddled system (or lack of system) carefully arranged (or disarranged) with a view to doing everything the hardest, slowest, longest, stupidest way. This explains the jumble of heterogeneous business

at each of the many, many unassorted departments of a French post office. It explains the elaborate copying and filing of what should go straight to the waste-basket. It explains why money orders are cut with shears instead of torn with the time-saving ruler. It explains why functionaries make their own blank-books, stitching them, oh, so carefully! It explains why stenography and typewriting are avoided in favor of longhand, why eighty clerks do the work of one mimeograph, and why nobody telephones when it is possible to send a messenger on foot, with another to see that he goes.

One morning I received notice that a parcel, with eight cents postage due, awaited me at Batignolles. Fired with curiosity, to Batignolles I went. In something under half an hour and after three futile attempts, I at last reached a building said to contain functionaries, and so it did. There were sixty, all in one room. Seven times, I was handed on from desk to desk. Ultimately reaching the right man, I surrendered my notice.

The man read it, got a bottle of mucilage, pasted my notice into a book, made a copy of the notice in longhand, pasted the copy into another book, brought a third book, had me put down my signature, and then, after consulting

a fourth book, wrote a number on a card—13,-973. With the card in his hand, he led me the whole length of the building and down a flight of stairs and the length of the building again, till we reached a large and absolutely window-less room. He struck a match ("fabrication of the State, contribution indirect") and induced a half-inch flame to appear upon the one lone solitary gas-jet. By this feeble light, I saw that the walls of the room were lined with shelves, and that the shelves groaned under a burden of innumerable bundles.

Naturally, I looked for some pretty conspicuous hint as to where bundle number 13,973 might be. By blue, no such hint existed! Oh, yes, the numbers on the bundles got bigger, in general, as you went from left to right—but only in general—and so it helped us only a little when we got in among the thirteen-thousands, as we had still to select my bundle from among hundreds of others, heaped helter-skelter all on the same shelf. What with the darkness, the dust, the fumbling, the many bundles whose numbers were upside-down or entirely concealed, not to mention the inclination of bundles to tumble off shelves, the search took us exactly twenty-one minutes by my watch.

Think of it! All this absurdity over an affair

of eight *sous!* And yet I understood it, perfectly. Instead of letting a postman bring the parcel and collect excess-postage at the door, this cumbersome, time-wasting, idiotically extravagant arrangement had been got up to employ additional functionaries and pad the payrolls with additional names in exchange for votes.

This was typical—except that I got my little bundle the first time I went, instead of receiving a blue ticket and being told to go across the city and exchange it for a pink ticket and come back in three days with two witnesses and be authorized to wait still longer.

So it is not only a burden to the tax-payer to have such hordes of needless drudges supported by the State; it is an infernal nuisance. Over a mere technicality regarding a birth-certificate or some infinitesimal question as to an automobile license, a citizen must tramp miles and waste hours and hours of his time. How he stands it, heaven knows! People of our own racial temperament would blow up or go mad or do murder. In any case, they would overthrow the Republic.

There is some logic, then, in the observations you hear in France concerning monarchy as a money-saving device. A royal family would

live high. Doubtless. But they would cost less than the curse that too often seems to be enabling two-thirds of the population to subsist by tangling up red tape for the other third.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *"The Violence"*

IT is all very well to talk of the French government as if that were what governed France, but the truth is, France has never been governed by its government. It is governed by the "big stick" its government wields, and there have even been times when the big stick wielded the government. This happened during the *Affaire Dreyfus*. Ever since, there have been those who remarked cynically, "France is not a republic. France is a military despotism."

Personally, I believe that the government once more governs the army; and yet the army, in its turn, is what governs France. The French policemen are soldiers, and, to a very great extent, the French soldiers are policemen. Save for being under continual military occupation, the French capital might soon enough be

overwhelmed by almost any one of the Republic's numerous foes at home. And even the army would have its hands full, holding the mob in check, were it not that asphalt and macadam, replacing the old-fashioned paving stones, make the erection of barricades exceedingly difficult.

But when you have enumerated the Republic's various enemies—Orleanists, Bonapartists, Laborites, Anarchists, and the rest—you have still to reckon with the violent and lawless element that cares absolutely nothing about what sort of government prevails in France, but will take advantage of an uproar to prey upon society. Indeed, this element is active enough and terrifying enough, even in times of peace.

You have heard of the organized gangs of robbers and cut-throats they call *Apaches*. We have similar types, over here. But we are as yet very little annoyed by Anarchists, as ours appear to content themselves with talking, and an occasional assassination. In France, however, the Anarchists wage a perpetual war. They seem not to be particularly keen on assassination, but do remarkably well at counterfeiting, burglary, and murderous highway robbery. They make capital bandits. It was they who horrified France by seizing automobiles, raiding banks, honking off with the loot, and,

when tracked to their lairs, defying both the troops and the police and forcing them to use dynamite.

When you read of the awful scenes enacted all over France during the Revolution and in Paris during the Commune, it is easy to feel that such horrors belong to the past. And yet a strain of precisely this atrocious barbarism survives in living France. There are the same uncivilized individuals. There is the same capacity in several million others for a temporary relapse into ferocity. Even the mildest and sweetest of French people have their savage moods, especially when a principle is at stake. Witness the riots in the churches when the government's henchmen set out to take inventories of church property preparatory to the enforcement of the Separation Law.

And eternally there is the war of capital and labor, which, as the labor leaders in France are generally Anarchists, becomes an incomparably graver menace than ever it does in America, though perhaps it hardly takes Anarchists to rouse a French working-man to the fury of *un mouton enragé.*

Why do you suppose so many things are so cheap in France? Consider, and you will see that the cheap things are always the ones whose

value is in the labor required in making them. Then ask yourself why labor should cost so little, and look about you for the answer, which is: Because the French working-people consent to go in wooden shoes, eat horse-meat, wear cotton next their skins, drink a vile red wine that tastes like vinegar, and live herded in damp, ill-lighted, tuberculosis-breeding tenements, hundreds of years old. What wonder, then, that once in a great, great while, some labor leader manages to rouse them to "the violence"?

But though there are enough anti-republican and anti-social forces in France to produce a chronic uneasiness, the vast bulk of the population holds "the violence" in unutterable abhorrence, and this feeling extends even to "the big stick," so that there results a remarkably even-tempered, moderate, and prudent employment of that weapon when its use becomes necessary.

Saw you ever such policemen? They "invite," they "request," and with the suavest monsieuring and madameing and always an "if it you please." When this fails, they wheedle, then argue, then profoundly regret that perchance they may be forced, wholly against their will, to make you do as they say. And yet no

one doubts their bravery or their ability to resort to strong measures when necessary, while as for their honesty, it is above suspicion. What wonder? They are veterans of the French army and under rigid military discipline.

Naturally, the French courts are not tempted to use "the violence," and yet the judiciary has a violence of its own, the world over; a repressive rigor, I mean; a way of allowing precedent and formality and the rules of evidence to outweigh the rights of the litigants themselves. Rather than risk abuses of that sort, France permits something extraordinarily like chaos. A witness is not only expected to tell what he knows, but what he guesses, imagines, and vaguely suspects. He will begin by saying, "I believe the prisoner guilty," or, "I believe the prisoner innocent." No matter how fantastic the wild conjectures with which he follows up his assertion, nobody cries, "I object," and nobody demands that this or that outrageous blast be "stricken from the record." In the French court, "everything goes." To prevent a thing's "going" would be equivalent, practically, to "the violence."

Furthermore, it would be contrary to the fundamental principle of French justice, which

aims to turn every witness completely inside-out. Not content with letting him say his say without hindrance, it confronts him with other witnesses, to make him say still more. Under this system, it becomes impossible for a clever lawyer to make a lying witness appear truthful, or a prejudiced witness appear broad-minded, or an illogical witness appear shrewd, or an imaginative, excitable, unbalanced witness appear a miracle of sound judgment. *Pas du tout!* Under the French system, the judge and the jury are enabled to determine as clearly as possible the personal make-up and the temperamental limitations of every witness.

This, really, is what tempts one to visit the French law-courts. To be sure, there is the picturesque side—*avocats* in flowing black robes with white *jabots,* judges in robes of black and ermine, or, if the case be brought before a high court of justice, robes of scarlet or dazzling yellow. But the picturesque element is nothing to the dramatic element. There are limits to picturesqueness, none whatever to French character.

Now, while French justice is reluctant to bear down heavily upon litigants, attorneys, and witnesses, it can bear down heavily enough upon a convicted criminal. Just how it bears down,

you may some day chance to observe—as a young lady at our *pension* did. She happened one morning to be out for a stroll through the quarter and noticed that people were crowding into a rather obscure side street, where it appeared that something a bit unusual must be going on.

True—oh, very! Following the crowds into the rather obscure side street, our young lady came face to face with the guillotine.

A more barbarous institution than these head-choppings in the public thoroughfares can hardly be imagined, and the horror of it becomes still more revolting when you discover that French wit can joke about it. No doubt you remember that monstrous shocker of Abel Faivre's in which he makes the executioner say to a client, "Come along, old fellow; it won't cost much. In fact, I promise you a little reduction."

I am free to admit that this atrocious witticism, taken on its merits alone, would go far to prove that "the violence" was by no means repugnant to the French temperament. Indeed, it would argue an infernal degree of cruelty, and fit in perfectly with the stories you hear about the abuse of horses in France and with the Frenchman's alleged heartlessness to-

ward the much more helpless unfortunate whom he is credited with calling a "daughter of joy."

Whereas, I have never once heard the term "fille de joie" in France nor seen it used in a French newspaper. What I have heard and seen is an expression of infinite pity—"la pauvre prostituée du trottoir." And although there are frightfully abused horses in France, just as elsewhere, you must surely have seen those frequent green-and-white signs, "Be good for the animals." And when you encounter Abel Faivre's wicked joke about the executioner and his "little reduction," it will pay to bear in mind that Faivre is a professional hair-lifter. It was he who borrowed the phrase they use as a headline for accounts of minor picture shows, "Les Petites Expositions," and adopted it as a title for a cartoon under which he wrote, "Good morning, Madame! I have just seen your husband at the Morgue. I predict he will be a great success." In a word, M. Faivre would make a first-class Rocky Mountain humorist, and might have composed the famous editorial, "The practise of throwing Indians and Chinamen down the shaft of Bill Bowman's mine will have to be stopped, as Bill is about to resume work on the mine. The well back of Mr.

Bowman's house is just as good, and is more centrally located."

The truth is, jokes like Faivre's are popular in France not because Frenchmen are cruel, but because Frenchmen are not, and their attitude toward the guillotine proves it. For years and years, the guillotine was in disuse. Its renewed activity, brought about by a floodtide of bloody murder, was regarded in France as a relapse into barbarism, and loud and angry were the protests from the neighbors wherever the executioner undertook to set up his machine. They felt that their street was eternally disgraced.

*Eh, bien,* 'tis a brutal institution, this guillotine, but they have another more brutal still, and that is the army. For there are times when *agents* or *serjeants de ville* or *Messieurs les flics*—to call the police by their various names, respectful and not—are anything but equal to the situation. Then come troops. Not militia merely, as with us. Instead, the regulars, of whom there are tens of thousands always on hand almost anywhere.

To an American newly arrived in France, nothing is more striking than the enormous profusion of French soldiers, with their baggy red

trousers, their blue jackets, and their epaulettes of red or white or yellow or green, according to the kind of soldier they happen to adorn—red for the ordinary young Frenchman making his compulsory *service militaire,* white for conscripts who serve as army clerks, yellow for the Colonials, green for the Foreign Legion.

Naturally, the red-epauletted troopers predominate, for they represent the infantry of the line, and, as such, one could wish them a great deal more soldierly than they are. For they wear their dowdy uniforms in a still dowdier style, and march in stupidly uneven ranks, and have the bored-to-death air of boys forced to spend three of their jolliest years doing what they wish to goodness they could shirk. This, of course, is not saying that the life of the *caserne* is devoid of enjoyment. It has its humors, undeniably, and its jovial good-fellowship, and oftentimes the colonel is not only admired but loved. Yet it is a kind of prison, for all that, and the wages (a cent a day) seem *un petit peu* inadequate, and you will hardly be surprised when you see the devices for counting the days and chopping one off every night.

As for the lads with white epaulettes, I never quite made out what they thought of the office-work they do, though, for my part, I think that

if I had to be a soldier with no chance of ever fighting, I should prefer to serve as a fireman—which seems a more comfortable way of life for a conscript and certainly not more dangerous, as fires are practically unheard of. What with stone walls, tiled or slated or metaled roofs, heavy oak floors, and (thanks to the great cost of telephones and electric lights) hardly any wires to get crossed, practically the only chances of a fire is that a chimney may get ablaze, in which case the *valet-de-chambre* runs to the roof, shovels up sand from the box that is kept always ready, and sprinkles it down the flue.

So, when you hear the alternately low and high honks of the automobile fire-truck and see it dash past with its load of brass-helmeted *sapeurs-pompiers,* don't infer fire. Pussy's in the well, or an omnibus has taken to the deep, or somebody's four-hundred-year-old tenement has caved in. Whatever goes wrong a Frenchman's first thought is to summon the firemen, who generally turn around immediately and cut for home. The only time I ever saw a French fire-engine in action, it was pumping out the water from a flooded basement.

But there is even a better reason for the white-epauletted French soldier's wishing him-

self a fireman—or almost anything but a white-epauletted French soldier. For he appreciates that the keeping of books or the weighing of sugar or the copying of records is in reality work for girls, and that the girls are finding it out and clamoring for his place, so that the "soldiers of the administration" can be released to serve as fighters. And if it seems odd that women should be ambitious to enter the army, have not women already distinguished themselves there, as *cantinières?*

What, now, of the yellow epaulettes—those belonging to the Colonials? They are not very numerous. For the "white man's burden" is in part borne by the French Zouaves—enormously picturesque fellows with red bloomers and blue jackets and red fezzes and a habit of carrying their rifles up-side down. And when it comes to shouldering the "white man's burden" at its very worst—in Africa, say—then France hands over the task to the famous green-epauletted Foreign Legion, composed chiefly of Germans.

A strange situation, this! On principle, France detests everything German—except German beer and German music—and if you want to be popular with Frenchmen you have only to bring the conversation around to the

subject of those awful scars on the Germans' faces and remark, "They say they got them in duels, but did you ever see them eat?" This is a joke that always succeeds, and the hilarity with which Frenchmen receive it tends to increase the apparent unreasonableness of admitting Germans into the French army, though, as a matter of fact, what could be more logical, considering? They are got in only for the dirtiest of dirty work, and the question is not one of tolerance, but rather of astonishment as to how they are induced to enlist.

This is how. Whenever a German officer strikes a soldier and the soldier hits back, the penalty for hitting back is death. So the boy scoots for the frontier, crosses into France, and is nabbed by the first French *gendarme* he meets, and given his choice of being returned to Germany or of joining the Foreign Legion, where he will have excellent pay and a pension on his retirement from active service and will not be required even to give his name. As between being certainly shot in Germany and being possibly shot in Africa, he chooses the latter.

At all events, such is the account of the Foreign Legion one hears most commonly in France, and the German hatred of it tends to

authenticate the story, though even Frenchmen will admit that not a few of the legionaries are young daredevils who have gambled away their fortunes or made themselves odious at home or actually committed heinous crimes.

Curiously, however, they fail to bring with them the fine military swagger of their country, or, if they do bring it, adopt all too soon the characteristic French sloppiness that pervades the entire infantry and even the artillery, till you are at a loss to see why the French jackies manage to look so natty—with their blue-and-white sailor collars and the red tufts on top of their navy-blue pancake hats and the jaunty air they have—and why the French cavalry—*chasseurs, dragons,* and *cuirassiers* alike—are simply superb—man for man as stunning to look at as the French officers themselves.

But is it a serious defect, really—the almost universal shabbiness of the French infantry and artillery and their careless marching and their lack of soldierly carriage? I doubt it. I am inclined to think that an army can kill every bit as effectually, even if it has not been drilled like a ballet, and I am inclined to believe that the little, round-shouldered French *pioupious* have a wonderful energy, matched by a wonderful endurance. If they are short of stature,

why, so much the better. They run the less risk of stopping bullets.

In point of numbers, they are greatly inferior to "the foe," and this, quite naturally, causes Frenchmen a deep and abiding anxiety, which would be a perfect nightmare were it not for their faith in the French officers. In France, no amount of social pull can gain promotion for an officer; it is study that counts and by diligent, persistent, back-breaking study a cobbler's son may rise to the very top rank of the military hierarchy. Moreover, Frenchmen believe in French horsemanship—and almost incredibly skilful it is—and in the audacity of their army aviators and aeronauts. Indeed, *Le Matin* made a tremendous impression with its pamphlet, "Our Future Is in the Air," and its national subscription (pretty extravagantly fanciful, it must be admitted) to present the French army with five thousand aeroplanes. But, however chimerical that project of *Le Matin's,* you have only to run out to Issy-les-Moulineaux and climb the fortifications any afternoon, to see the sky fairly alive with army aeroplanes and perhaps to watch the ascent of a *dirigeable.*

All in all, then, France has prepared no little supply of "the violence" for her foes, when

any such arise, and, inasmuch as her troops are quartered here and there in all the French cities, she can deal out "the violence" to her own people in time of riot. And in and about the Capital she not only supports great masses of conscripts, with fortresses at Vincennes and Mont-Valérien and elsewhere, but maintains a standing army of soldier-policemen called the Garde Républicaine—terrible infantry and even more terrible dragoons—stationed in readiness for instant action. There is never a fête or a procession or any large assemblage of Parisians, but, sure enough, out comes the Garde Républicaine (generally mounted) to maintain order and meet the first signs of "the violence" with threats inconceivably more awesome.

And yet, even when those "enraged muttons," the French laborers, take to "manifesting," under the leadership of their Anarchist demagogues, and singing the "International," and crying "Down with the Republic," and throwing things, and raising a really alarming amount of French hob, it is splendid to see how very, very reluctant the army is to let loose "the violence," and how, when "the violence" absolutely has to be let loose, the coolest imaginable decorum is maintained along with a determination to break heads only in the strictest

possible accordance with "liberty, equality, fraternity."

Take, for instance, a good old-fashioned Labor Day rumpus, such as used to be a regular institution in Paris and will perhaps become so again—or, if that fails, there are sure to be plenty of substitutes.

It is rarely an impromptu rumpus—this sort of affair I am discussing. Certain newspapers—organs of Socialists, Laborites, and Anarchists, or perhaps all three—call upon the faithful to assemble and "manifest," naming the day, the hour, the place—usually a large open square.

Well in advance of the appointed time, the Garde Républicaine is on hand, squadrons of cavalry are posted here and there, hundreds of policemen are prepared to make *arrestations,* and, ever since daybreak, interminable red-legged files of troops have been pouring into the city.

Thus far, the government's campaign has been in the nature of a military promenade. Not a *manifestant* anywhere but has first-hand ocular knowledge that "the violence" is ready to break heads. Consequently it may be said that all who insist on "manifesting" do so at their own risk.

Ah, but see what is going on, despite all that! At the farther end of the square—oh, *regardez, messieurs!*—gangs of dare-devils have stalled a tram, overturned two omnibuses, heaped together a lot of push-carts, and improvised a barricade. The mob gathers behind it, hooting and jeering, and the army officers recognize that matters have already gone too far. It is time for "the violence."

Only observe, though, how decorously, how ceremoniously—how mercifully, even—they set about breaking heads. At our end of the square, they marshal a terrifying host of *cuirassiers.* From behind their barricade, the revolutionists see it done. Then the clarions sound. Every revolutionist knows what that means. It is the signal for good folks to take to the tall timber. If anybody insists on sticking it out after the first blare of brass, *eh, bien,* his blood be upon his own head!

Next move: The cavalry ride at a walk to the barricade, thus giving a perfectly unequivocal dress-rehearsal of what is to follow. The officers call upon the "manifestants" to disperse. Instead, they howl and curse, and a thousand heterogeneous missiles rain down upon the troops, jingling loudly against the steel of hel-

mets and breast-plates, scaring horses, and even doing some little injury.

With absolute composure, the *cuirassiers* wheel about, and ride back to our end of the square.

Again the clarions sound—in earnest, this time. Then, what a charge! Headlong at a gallop, with sabers flashing and spurs digging deep, the cavalry storm the barricade, leaping every obstacle, hewing to right and left without pity, and scattering the mob in forty different directions at once.

*C'est dommage!* Every one is sorry, and yet, if the doleful business had to be got over with, whose fault was it? The army's? No, the "enraged muttons'," and we observe signs that, for several moons at least, they will be "sage."

## CHAPTER XIV

### *The End of All Living*

"WHEN in Paris," says the wise and foolish epigram—"when in Paris, do as the Parasols"; and I have known Americans to apply the principle in such a manner that they were in terror lest somebody might write home about it. Which was overworking the epigram's foolish side and doing a grave injustice to the wisdom there is in it.

For there are ways—plenty of agreeable, gracious ways—in which it is only decent to adopt French customs while in France; and I think there is no French custom we Americans should be quicker to adopt than that of lifting one's hat while a funeral is passing by. Certainly the temptation to be French, for the moment, is never stronger than then—the touch-

ing simplicity of the scene tugs so at one's feelings.

To be sure, it somewhat justifies the term, *pompes funébres*. The black-draped hearse, the black horses in housings of black, the black-clad driver with his immense black *bicorne* hat —these, even at a modest funeral, have a certain air of grandeur; at a sumptuous funeral (such as the one a Paris shop-keeper gave himself a few years ago in imitation of those vouchsafed to Presidents of the Republic) they become magnificent; but not one single solitary carriage ever follows the hearse. People walk. Two and two, they go, through the middle of the street, all the way from the house or the church to the cemetery. If it pours, they still walk. To ride, as we do, would seem to them an act of disrespect to the departed.

At first, you may perhaps trace a certain indelicacy in this march of mourners through the streets, where every one sees their woful faces and where concealment, except behind veils, is impossible. But when you come to understand French life and realize how little of it is ever concealed, you think such publicity only natural. Moreover, you appreciate that this lack of timidity has its advantages. In time of sorrow, there is a wonderful outpouring of sym-

pathy—not by means of flowers, alone, or by mere letters of condolence—but by word of mouth, and oh, so tenderly!

Perfectly ingenuous, then, is the reverence paid to grief, all along the route of a funeral procession. On the sidewalks, on the tops of trams and even inside them, men lift their hats and women cross themselves. It is the custom. The roughest, as well as the gentlest, observe it always.

Curiously, though, they will tell you that the chief motive in it is respect for the dead. It belongs with the sentiment that sends hundreds of thousands of Parisians to Père Lachaise, on All Saints' Day and the Day of the Dead, there to heap flowers and beaded wreaths on tombs that shelter no kin of theirs. For the Parisians are not Parisian, they are transplanted provincials in the main, and small indeed is the chance that any one of them has relatives buried in Père Lachaise cemetery. They go there to pay their homage to vanished generations. It is a kind of call. As M. Jules Claretie has remarked, not altogether inaptly, the dead have "their day."

Naturally, it is to the tombs of celebrities that the crowds bring their most lavish offerings, and doubtless it was logical enough of M. Max

Nordau to assume that one could judge by the number of wreaths how "live" a dead hero still was. At any rate, I thought I read a deal of meaning in his assertion that, whereas statesmen, soldiers, and scientists had but a meager hold upon the living, there was abundant hope that a novelist, a poet, an actor, or a musician would survive many a long year in the affections of the French people. What throngs around the tombs of Musset, of Rachel, of Chopin!

At the same time, I thought M. Nordau overlooked positively the most touching scene in all that vast city of the dead. This to my mind was the slowly changing group before a stone cross. It is a monument of no especial importance—that cross—yet all day long the group of people was there, standing and reading again and again the inscription, "Marthe, Sixteen Years." Nothing more besides. Just the little creature's name and her age. Yet there was a hush all about the place, and you could hear strangers murmur, in tones of infinite pathos, "*Marthe, Seize Ans!*"

You see, then, the sort of spirit it is in which men lift their hats and women cross themselves as a funeral procession winds slowly by in a French street. Sorrow for the living blends with a far, far deeper sorrow for the dead. The

spirit will be yours, too, if you give yourself up to it, nor will it require any especial self-surrender, once you have visited the cemetery toward which the mourners take their way—so horribly dismal that cemetery is.

Imagine an enormous, high-walled enclosure, filled with tiny stone houses ranged along narrow, paved streets, where trees and living flowers are few and green grass almost wholly replaced with gravel. The little stone houses are the tombs. And if you see graves like ours and monuments like ours, they are quite the exception.

Nowhere, it seems to me, is the contrast between French and Anglo-Saxon ideals more pronounced than just here. I think of Wordsworth's grave or Emerson's; then of those bleak little stone houses and those hideous artificial flowers and those beaded wreaths marked "Regrets." I think of the fresh greenery in our graveyards; then of those dreary paved lanes and that pitiless gravel.

It goes back to a difference of esthetic standards, of course. The Anglo-Saxon can make a delicious village, never a splendid metropolis; the Frenchman can make a splendid metropolis, never a delicious village. Left to their own devices, the French will formalize even their

parks, and a woful dearth of vine and lawn and shrub robs their cathedrals of half their beauty. So it would be strange, perhaps, if their cemeteries escaped the all too common blight of bareness and conventionalized ugliness.

Then, too, it is clear that there must also be a difference of tradition, and that the French custom goes back to the days of old Rome, as why should it not? Much that we call French is essentially Roman, and if a *père de famille* can dictate his son's marriage, precisely as the *pater familias* did, what wonder if the family tomb suggests some mausoleum beside the stone-paved Appian Way?

Utterly dreadful these French cemeteries would be, were it not for the presence of the living, who come with their flowers and their wreaths, not only on All Saints' Day and the *Jour des Morts,* but at many another time. Besides, they have a beautiful custom, in France, of paying homage to the illustrious dead by assembling their admirers around their tombs on their anniversaries. Then come "the Friends of Balzac," "the Friends of Maupassant," "the Friends of Brunetière." Papers are read, speeches delivered. It is a kind of memorial service—or rather not that, exactly, for it is so purely secular, as a rule.

Far more predominant than one would imagine is the unreligious—I had almost said irreligious—character of even funerals in France. Those one notices, naturally, are the church funerals, with their hangings of black velvet about the door. The immense initial letter, the silver fringes, the decorations in silver and white make an impression nobody ever forgets. What one fails to observe is the frequency with which French funerals not only avoid the church, but avoid every semblance of religious ceremonial.

We happened to be in Paris when a much-beloved President of the Chamber of Deputies (Speaker of the House) died and was buried. No priest or *pasteur* stood beside his bier in the Palais Bourbon. No service was read. There was not one faintest suggestion of faith in the life to come. Almost as if they had been laying a corner-stone or opening an exposition, his fellow-statesmen stood up in their swallow-tail coats and made speeches. Actually, one of them apostrophized the dead, crying, "My dear, dear friend! I shall never see you again." Indeed, we might almost have been back in the ghastly Revolutionary days when Frenchmen wrote upon the gates of cemeteries, "Death is an eternal sleep."

Outside, on the *quais,* and on the bridge and in the vast spaces of the Place de la Concorde, the troops were massed. All along the Rue Royale, ten thousand broken-backed chairs had been set out for the spectators to stand on. Windows and balconies were crowded. Policemen struggled to keep order. *Camelots* peddled obituaries and post-card portraits of the deceased. People chattered, even laughed, enjoying their holiday. We heard them comparing notes—telling of the great funerals they had seen—some recalling Victor Hugo's, magnificent in every detail save the one he insisted upon in his will, namely a hearse of the poorest, humblest, meanest kind.

That delightful Paris correspondent, Mr. Stoddard Dewey, had told me to grasp the first opportunity that offered of seeing a State funeral; he called it a pageant of color, a proof that for once, at least, republicanism could be gorgeous; and this procession that followed the immense black catafalque that day fully justified all Mr. Dewey had said.

I remember cabinet ministers with brilliant sashes worn diagonally across their shirt-fronts; I remember Academicians, in their uniforms of black and garish green; I remember the diplomatic corps in their dazzling regalia, with

their breasts simply covered with jeweled orders—as gorgeous a company, almost, as the throng of judges in robes of crimson, of scarlet and of brilliant yellow. Then came the troops—dragoons, *cuirassiers, zouaves,* artillerymen and their guns, and interminable files of red-legged *infanterie de la ligne*—their officers in dress uniform, precisely as at a Longchamp review before the President of the Republic on the Fourteenth of July.

But where were the clergy? In the whole stupendous procession, not a cassock, not a crosier, not even a crucifix! Nowhere the smallest recognition of what was once an "estate" in France. In fact, the cortége was as pagan, practically, as the sort of monument considered suitable for a "glory of the France"—that is to say, his bust and around it his virtues typified by bronze or marble ladies shamelessly nude.

Quite secular, too, is that last and greatest honor possible to a "glory of the France," namely, the "translation of his cinders" to the Panthéon. There are speeches. There is a sumptuous parade. If he was an author, some actress or other may perhaps dress up in Greek robes and recite passages from his works. Then his "cinders" will be laid to rest in one of the dismally prosaic caves beneath the church

that is no longer a church and where the only music is furnished by a fierce-mustachioed fellow, with flaming red stripes down the side-seams of his trousers, who goes about clanking a bunch of enormous keys and intoning loudly, "Poor lah vizzeet oh tombo-o-o-oh! Poor lah vizzeet oh tom-bo-o-o-o-oh!"

* * * * * * *

Such, at absolutely its most illustrious, is the end of living France, and it remains to write an epitaph.

Of almost any Frenchman, gathered to his fathers, I think you may say without extravagance:

"He was strong in body, despite most untoward circumstances; serious in mind, though capable of infinite jollity; gifted with rare genius, albeit of a technical rather than a practical order; artistic, and therefore courteous; in morals, no Puritan, but at the same time no hypocrite; religious, and only the more so if his religion consisted in a passionate hatred of all religion whatsoever; fiery in his love of children, of glory, and of sociability; and patient under government except when cruelly used or when assailed in his principles.

"In a word, he was human, and if he had his

weaknesses, he nevertheless displayed a hardihood, a tenderness, and a romantic idealism that won him the love and admiring remembrance of all who knew him well."

THE END

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